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THE
AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE

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By the same author

POPULAR DICTIONARY OF AUSTRALIAN SLANG
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The
Australian Language

An examination of the English language and English speech as used in Australia, from convict days to the present, with special reference to the growth of indigenous idiom and its use by Australian writers.

By
SIDNEY J. BAKER

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TO
SALLY AND SUZANNE
And all other lovely women

Here, surely, is new wealth, expressive of a distinctive
and vigorous life, material for an individual literature.

—W. K. HANCOCK, "Australia", 1930.

FOREWORD

WHILE obviously of no interest to the general reader, a book preface is often useful to the author. He can, for instance, use it to commend his own hard work, to apologize for deficiencies, to wag a finger at critics; he may even use it to introduce his book. This introduction has but one object—to express gratitude.

During the years I spent collecting material for this book, it was my good fortune to enlist not only the interest, but the devoted help, of many people. To mention everyone who has assisted me with criticism, abuse or material during my efforts to sort out the Australian language would be impossible. There are, however, many people whose aid I cannot forget and who, each in his or her own way, supplied some part of the picture I have attempted to draw in these pages. I offer special words of thanks to the following:

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Errors and omissions inevitably occur in a book of this type. With the object of reducing them to a minimum, I cordially invite anyone, anywhere, to send corrections and additions to me care of Angus and Robertson Limited, Sydney.

S. J. B.

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PART I

CHAPTER I

THE NEW LANGUAGE

I.—WHAT IS AUSTRAL ENGLISH?

THIS is a book without beginning or end. If it had a beginning it would go back to foggy yesterdays in world history that have never been explored. If it had an end it would pitchfork us down the slippery-dip of time into a world we will never know.

Many books have been written about language, but few have had the advantages and disadvantages of this work. Our main advantage is that 150-odd years is a handful of time that can be comprehended by almost anyone. Our main disadvantage is that 150-odd years is an exceedingly brief period for a nation to acquire an idiom of its own and our ears will have to be well-cocked to windward to catch all the tones and overtones of that idiom if we are going to make anything like a story out of it.

Much of our awe about American speech habits today is due to the fact that, a little over a century ago, the Americans discovered they had a language of their own. Or, rather, the English discovered it and their feeling of annoyance was just about the same as if they had found someone dynamiting the Bloody Tower. H. L. Mencken tells the story of that resentment in "The American Language". It became a mania. To the English it was as though Americans individually and in bulk were spitting on the British Constitution—as though they were fostering un-English modes of speech out of spite for what, in later years, the journal "Time"¹ was to call "that old goat, the English language".

The influence of geography and environment on the emergence of new dialectal habits was ignored.²

¹ 7 August 1939.

² In a note on American slang, the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" (1939 edition) observes: "The mixture of races and the general breaking up

of old associations which accompanied the first great western migrations were peculiarly favourable to the development of a highly flavoured colloquial style. And in gen-

Then came the dictionary-makers and philologists who set themselves to prove how un-English the Americans had become. They have done their work well. It is doubtful whether any nation is today as intensely interested in its own speech as the United States,³ or gives greater encouragement to philological research, or cares less for the traditional lingual habits of Britain.

"The early Americans showed that spacious disregard for linguistic nicety which has characterised their descendants ever since," notes Mencken. "They reduced verb-phrases to simple verbs, turned verbs into nouns, nouns into verbs, and adjectives into either or both."

The result has been a rich, violent language, full of racy idiom, untamed and pretty near untameable.

"Anyone who tries to issue a lexicon of American slang will have something the size of a cow barn," wrote H. T. Webster.⁴ This word-making lust has proved almost as intimidating to the Australians as it has to the English.

It is scarcely necessary to emphasize that the history of this country is in many ways similar to that of the United States. The original white inhabitants were English-speaking and many of them had little love for the England they had left behind. They were faced with new modes of life, new environments and the heartbreak of carving a livelihood out of countries they did not understand or know. Both countries were originally dumping-grounds for English convicts; both countries were distant from their joint motherland; and, since it was impossible for them to be industrial, both countries were close to the earth and all that grew from it.

It would not be illogical, therefore, to expect that, in some ways at least, the lingual history of the United States and Australia should tally. In the first place there was the environ-

eral it may be said that the frontier of America, after the colonial period, has always been a border line of romance between reality and unreality in which slang expressions have made a vigorous growth. Australia has slang, possibly for a similar reason, that the occupying of the country has been in no little degree an exhilarating and romantic adventure."

³ However, in a personal letter

to me, dated 19 June 1942, H. L. Mencken wrote: "The Australian record (of her slang and colloquial speech) is immensely superior to the American record. Until 1925 or thereabouts only a handful of competent philologists ever showed any interest in the subject. There is a better spirit now, but so far it has not produced a slang dictionary of scientific merit."

⁴ "Forum", December 1933.

mental influence: new flora and fauna to be named, new geographical peculiarities to be described. In this way Australia acquired *kangaroo*, *kookaburra*, *billabong*, *kurrajong*, *bunyip*, from the natives; *wattle*, *bush*, *Darling Pea*, *honey-ant* and so on, as our own contributions. Second, there were the non-environmental words we filched from the natives: *cooee*, *gin*, *lubra*, *gunyah*, *budgerie*, *boomerang*, *humpy*. Then there were words which arose out of our new conditions of life: *stockyard*, *stockman*, *bushranger*, *hut-keeper*, *Hawkesbury duck*, *new chum*, *bullock dray*. And after these in turn came the words that fell into place as our cities grew and the people in them acquired tastes and interests of their own: *larrikin*, *bosey*, *run the rabbit*, *wowser*, *S.P. joint*, *Fitzroy cocktail*, *connie*, *spurge*, *sheila*—words which, in their thousands, form the wide and recognizably solid structure that is the Australian language today.

This, in brief, covers the main evolution of our language.

On the other side of the Pacific America had already gone through the same processes; she had set her flora and fauna in place, had purloined scores of Indian words and mutilated them to suit her own purposes, had caught up with her environment, and had begun to evolve a city life of her own with all the slinguistic frills that that venture has involved.⁵

If, therefore, there are these similarities between Australia and America, would we be entitled to expect our colloquial speech habits to be similar also?

The answer is a partial affirmative. In so far as the environmental and geographical conditions of one country correspond to those of another country the languages of those countries tend to be similar, but as the conditions of life and environment vary so do the languages.

In short, language thrives best against its native background. Transplant it and you begin to remould the language.

There are two simple examples in the Australian uses of *opossum* and *iguana*. *Opossum* comes from North American Indians—from about 1610, says Mencken—and in the U.S. is

⁵ Writing in 1829 in "The Picture of Australia", R. Mudie commented: "The English of the United States is not the same as that of England; though, at the time when those states were first colonized, there was no difference between them. Each language has since received new words and new idioms and addi-

tions are made to these every day. We can see sufficient reason for this increasing difference of language . . . first, the different objects in the two countries; second, intercourse with different nations; and third, differences of occupation and habit."

applied to the marsupial family Didelphyidae. In Australia we have applied it to an entirely different group of marsupials. The term *iguana* was applied in the West Indies and South America to a large aboreal lizard. In Australia we have applied it to our Varanidae or monitor lizards, which are a different species altogether.

The result is that when an American speaks of a possum or an iguana he is talking about something entirely different from the possum or iguana Australians know. What happened was that the people responsible for naming the Australian phalanger and monitor did not leave enough slack in their imagination to make allowance for geography. Similarity tricked them.

Noah Webster puts the case in the introduction to his "American Dictionary of the English Language" (1828):

Language is the expression of ideas; and if the people of one country cannot preserve an identity of ideas [with the people of another country], they cannot retain an identity of language. Now, an identity of ideas depends materially upon a sameness of things or objects with which the people of the two countries are conversant. But in no two portions of the earth, remote from each other, can such identity be found. Even physical objects must be different.

This is why the great bulk of American speech will remain foreign to us; just as most Australian speech will remain foreign to Americans. It is because the objects with which our two peoples are conversant are often no more similar than the opossums and iguanas already mentioned.

This statement holds for more than flora and fauna. It holds for our environment, our habits, our eating and drinking, our pastimes—in fact for everything that makes an American recognizable as an American and an Australian recognizable as an Australian.⁶

The Australian is inclined to feel that he has no identity to call his own. But you will not find an Englishman confusing

⁶ "Whenever a people, by emigration into a different soil and climate, by a large influx of foreigners into its territory, by political or religious revolutions, or other great and comprehensive social changes, is brought into contact with new objects, new circumstances, new cares, labours and duties, it is, obviously under the necessity of framing or borrowing new words, or of modifying the received meaning of old ones, in

such way as to express the new conditions of material existence, the new aims and appetencies, to which the change in question gives birth." —George P. Marsh, "Lectures on the English Language" (1859), p. 241.

An even more succinct summary is given by R. C. Trench, in "English Past and Present" (1855): "New words are coined out of the necessity which men feel of filling up gaps in the language."

an Australian with an American; or an American confusing an Australian with an Englishman. If you meet an Australian who has the idea he is a cipher suspended in a vacuum between English tradition and American slang you will know he is suffering from the nonentity-megalomania common to all young countries. This sense of inferiority occurred in America in her young days; it thrives in a particularly vicious form in New Zealand. Apologetic foot-shuffling has always been a feature of colonial adolescence.

Like the American (though there were more Americans to shoulder the shame of their own shortcomings), the Australian has been accused of un-English practices—the jargon he speaks, his accent, his eating and drinking habits, his Christmas that falls without Yule logs in the middle of summer.⁷ In the strange way of colonials he has been ashamed, because his own customs were formless and casual, while the vast tradition of England hung over his head like a curse of Judgment Day. It was not that he distrusted himself, but that he had no answer to the accusation; he had a blind feeling for the way he was going, but he did not know what forces drew him along the path of an individual destiny.

So he acquired the feeling that he was a nothingness—not English certainly, but not Australian either, because he could not sense enough self-contained identity in himself to be recognizably anything.

Since there are few things that sit closer to the core of human existence and of social progress than the language of everyday life, it was in the Achilles heel of his speech that the Australian was pinked time and again.

In 1826 P. Cunningham wrote in his "Two Years in New South Wales":

A number of slang phrases current in St Giles's Greek bid fair to become legitimised in the dictionary of this colony . . . the dross passing here as genuine, even among all ranks.

⁷ A commentary on some of the "natural" differences between Australia and England is given by Brian Penton, through the mouth of one of his characters in "Landtakers" (1934): "It's a long way from your merry old England out here, and it's a very funny sort of place, where nothing happens like it should. Christmas comes in the middle of

summer. The north wind's hot and the south wind's cold. Trees drop their bark and keep their leaves. The flowers don't smell and the birds don't sing. The swans are black and the eagles white. You burn cedar to boil your hominy and build your fences out of mahogany. Aye, it's not the same as the Old Country at all."

And in 1829 Edward Gibbon Wakefield wrote in "A Letter from Sydney":

Bearing in mind that our lowest class [i.e. the convicts] brought with it a peculiar language [to Australia], and is constantly supplied with fresh corruption, you will understand why pure English is not, and is not likely to become, the language of the colony.

The fact that Wakefield was, at the time of writing, in Newgate prison for abduction and had never seen Australia, does not rob the statement of its pertinency, for Wakefield had closely studied writings on the country and was merely repeating what had been said, perhaps with less exactitude, by others. He adds:

Terms of slang and flash are used, as a matter of course, everywhere, from the gaols to the Viceroy's palace, not excepting the Bar and the Bench. No doubt they will be reckoned quite parliamentary, as soon as we obtain a parliament.⁸

Statements like these were part of the indictment built up against Australia and its inhabitants: an indictment which, with many variations and elaborations, has been levelled for more than a century. Often the statements were contradictory; they were rarely supported by careful analysis, and were confused and misleading because of the succession of red herrings dragged across our lingual highway; but they all conspired to convince the Australian of his lack of identity.

"The weird jargon that passes for English in this country . . . a horrible patois," writes V. Desmond in "The Awful Australian" (1911). "America gives us most of the slang we do not get from England," says Penton, in "Think—Or Be Damned" (1941)—a view that is repeated in his "Advance Australia—Where?" (1943). And then this quotation from the Sydney "Telegraph", 14 July 1936: "Australian slang is thin and meagre, and Australians are a genteel people, more shocked by slangy talk even than the philologists of the B.B.C."

There is obviously confusion and ignorance somewhere; someone must be wrong. We cannot be genteel as well as accomplished vulgarians. If, according to Wakefield, the Australians were not speaking "pure English" in 1829, it is scarcely likely that J. A. Froude could be correct when he writes in "Oceana" in

⁸ The use of slang by the Australian clergy was commented on by A. Russell, "A Tour Through the Australian Colonies" (1840). He de-

clared that "slang terms [were] in use for everyday occurrences" in sermons in Presbyterian and Episcopal churches.

1873: "The first thing that struck me—and the impression that remained during all my stay in Australia—was the pure English that was spoken there." If Wakefield were wrong and Froude were right then it would surely not be correct for the London "Daily Chronicle" of 22 November 1905 to declare: "There are 'Australianisms' enough to make a dictionary an essential to a proper understanding of an antipodean journal"; or for R. E. N. Twopeny⁹ to comment on "the bent of colonial genius in the manufacture of a new dialect", or for Karl Lentzner¹⁰ to write of the "rich and racy slang of the fifth continent—the mighty Australian commonwealth of the future".

If we could be persuaded to believe this 1908¹¹ opinion in the Sydney "Evening News": "Contrary to common opinion, Australia possesses a very limited slang vocabulary. What is supposed to be Australian slang is often either an appropriation from abroad or a corruption of some foreign term"—then we should be obliged to reject the statement by Colonel Arthur Lynch in 1919¹² that Australian slang is "exuberant in vitality and full of character"; the view of Eric Partridge, the English slang authority, in 1935¹³ that our slang has "force and picturesqueness . . . richness and variety"; and the declaration by C. Hartley Grattan in 1942¹⁴ that "Australian slang is, next to the American, the most vivid, vigorous and comprehensive in the world."

We should also be puzzled when we learn that between 1880 and 1940 nearly a score of dictionaries and word-lists of Australian slang and colloquial speech were published.

These diverse quotations make clear the task before us. We must chop away the deadwood of casual opinion and look at the material itself before we pass judgment. At the outset we must rid ourselves of preconceived views that all Australian

⁹ "Town Life in Australia" (1883), p. 245. "There is room for a very interesting dictionary of Australianisms," adds Twopeny.

¹⁰ "Wörterbuch der englischen Volkssprache Australiens", Leipzig (1891). An English edition was also published, but was withdrawn almost immediately as it infringed sundry copyrights. Lentzner described himself as "formerly examiner in modern languages at the Sydney Grammar School and at the King's School, Parramatta".

¹¹ 11 July 1908. "Australian Slang", by O.B.

¹² In the July issue of "English".

¹³ "Slang Today and Yesterday", second edition, 1935, p. 288. Partridge was born in New Zealand and lived for many years in Australia. His best known and most monumental work is his "Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English", 1936, 1938.

¹⁴ "Introducing Australia".

slang has been imported in bulk from America or is pure Cockney or is negligible or has nothing to do with our unique cis-equatorial life.

Since a phrase such as "the Australian language" can be interpreted in many ways, it becomes necessary to define the scope of our inquiry. Strictly speaking, the Australian language should be interpreted as including every expression that has originated in Australia and every new meaning Australia has given to expressions as used in England or other parts of the world. This would require the inclusion of many thousands of terms by which Australia has described her flora and fauna, which would serve little purpose at all.

If we intended to embrace all mutations, then we might be led into the trap into which Professor E. E. Morris fell in his "Austral English Dictionary"¹⁵ when he made the following entries:

Christmas, n. and adj. As Christmas falls in Australasia at Midsummer, it has different characteristics from those in England and the word has therefore a different connotation.

December, n. A summer month in Australia. See *Christmas*.

July, n. A winter month in Australia. See *Christmas*.

Midwinter, n. The seasons being reversed in Australia, Christmas occurs in the middle of summer. The English word *Midsummer* has thus dropped out of use, and "Christmas" or "Christmastime", is its Australian substitute, whilst *Midwinter* is the word used to denote the Australian winter-time of late June and early July. See *Christmas*.

If these entries were justified then Morris should have included other terms such as Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, January, February, March, and all the rest, because our seasons are different from those of England. And he might have been justified in including a note about north and south, because an Englishman looks to the south-east to see the sun rise and we look to the north-east.

These facts may be interesting enough in themselves, but it is obvious they will teach us little about Australian colloquial speech and idiom. They may appeal to the visitor from the northern hemisphere who finds our climate out of schedule, but they mean nothing to the Australian who cares little for the seasonal habits of the solar system on the other side of the world.¹⁶

¹⁵ London, 1898.

¹⁶ Commentary on the English use of Far East, Near East and Middle

East would be far more relevant, since they represent, for the Australian, a completely illogical set of

No, the Australian language we want to examine is something closer to the blood-beat of everyday life. It is something that will help us see the Australian in the round, as a person living and talking in his own way and not much more concerned with English traditions, customs, and clichés than the average American. We want to hear him talk as we will hear him in Subiaco and Footscray and Surry Hills and Oodnadatta and from the back benches of Federal Parliament; as he has spoken during the past 150 years at work and at play; as he has spoken in the outback, in mining towns, in jails and at war. And then, perhaps, we shall see who this Australian is and whether, after all, he is the sapless cipher so many Australians seem to think he is.

For the purposes of this book, therefore, we will forget about flora and fauna, except some of the popular nicknames we use for them, and we will avoid hair-splitting of the Morris type. We will try to make a simple examination of Australian history in terms of the popular speech we have developed as incidental to our cultural growth.¹⁷ We will also have to see what our writers are doing about Australian idiom; how much, in terms of fact and not hypothesis, we are influenced by English and U.S. speech; what national speech characteristics we have acquired.

These things become necessary because out of them springs the picture we seek.

"Language most shows a man: speak that I may see thee!" quoth Ben Jonson. "It springs out of the most retired and inmost parts of us, and is the image of the parent of it, the mind. No glass renders a man's form and likeness so true as his speech."

terms. When an Australian speaks of the Far East he is speaking in terms of an idea divorced from the sense of the words themselves, for the English Far East is our Due North. In the same way England's Near East is our Far West, her Middle East our Middle West. Sooner or later these terms are doomed to die in Australia, along with other English clichés.

language thoroughly, both in itself and in its relation to other tongues . . . we must carefully examine . . . even the expressions of the vulgar, among which may often be found words and phrases connecting the particular language under discussion with others, by affinities, which, but for such research, might have remained unknown."—J. Stoddart, "Glossology" (1858).

¹⁷ "In order to comprehend any

2.—GOOD ENGLISH AND ALL THAT

Since much of the material in this book falls uncompromising into the category of slang, it would be well to make some brief comment on the nature of this form of speech. Perhaps, at the outset, the word "form" is wrong, because slang is essentially formless: what is slang today is standard speech tomorrow; what is standard tomorrow may have degenerated into slang the day after.¹⁸ The history of the English language is littered with such examples.

Words like *jabber* and *hoax* were slang in Swift's time; *mob* and *sham*. Even as late as 1860 *to send a man to Coventry* was classed as slang by J. C. Hotten. In "The Pains of Opium" Thomas de Quincey refers to "the slang use of the word *accomplishment* as a superficial and ornamental attainment. And in his "Glossology", Stoddart protests against "such barbarous terms as *snobbishness* and *flunkeyism*".

Many expressions we regard as distasteful vulgarisms today were well-approved in the days of Shakespeare and Marlowe.

Language is never static; it is being continually moulded and modified. Turn the pages of Murray's "New English Dictionary" and pause at the simple word "in". There are more than nineteen columns of closely-packed type on that one word alone.

If one fragment of the English language requires so much to be written about it in order that its every shade of meaning and use may be understood, we should not be amazed to learn that 50,000,000 words are within the covers of Murray's gigantic work, and that all these are necessary to explain the uses and applications of the 400,000-odd words defined.²⁰

Work finished in 1943 on the "Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles", edited by Sir William A

¹⁸ "Slang . . . seeks relief from the often oppressive conventionalities, even insipidity, of words worn out by the use of persons who have put neither knowledge nor feeling into them, and which seem incapable of expressing anything that is real. In the exuberance of mental activity and the natural delight of language-making, slang is a necessary evil; and there are grades and uses of slang whose charm no one need be ashamed to feel and confess; it is like reading a narrative in a series of rude but telling pictures, instead

of in words."—W. D. Whitney, "The Life and Growth of Language" (1889).

¹⁹ Now generally known as the "Oxford Dictionary".

²⁰ The main work of Murray's "Dictionary" contained a record of 414,825 words: 240,165 main, and 67,105 subordinate words, 47,800 special and 59,755 obvious combinations. It contained 15,487 pages; total of 46,464 columns which, placed end to end, would cover nine miles. (From "The Periodical", vol. xix, No. 173, p. 8.)

Craigie, who was co-editor of the "New English Dictionary", and Dr James R. Hulbert, Professor of English at the University of Chicago. Millions more words have been harnessed to the job of defining new U.S. terms and new meanings that America has given to English terms. And now a "Dictionary of Australasian English" is in process of compilation.²¹

Long before Murray's "Dictionary" was completed research workers were compiling a supplement to it. It will be the same with the "American English Dictionary" and with the "Australasian English Dictionary". To the making of new words there is no end.

It is somewhere just a little below the borderline of current respectability that slang appears. For instance, in 1899 when Sydney "Truth" and its tub-thumping chief John Norton were putting *wowser* into circulation in Australia, you might have heard it used in Redfern and Woolloomooloo, but it would not have been current in Elizabeth Bay or Darling Point, because respectable people did not read "Truth" in those days and they could not be expected to know what went on in the columns of that journal. But a quarter of a century has changed *wowser* from low journalistic slang to a well-established Australianism.

Declared the Sydney "Telegraph" in a leading article on 31 July 1937:

If Australia had given nothing more to civilization than that magnificent label for one of its most melancholy products—the word *wowser*—it would not have been discovered in vain.

Or we could take an older example, *larrikin*, which came into currency in Melbourne a little before 1870. There are good reasons to suspect that *wowser* has English dialectal antecedents,²² but of *larrikin* we can say that the case is water-tight.²³ Australia

21 "Dictionaries beget dictionaries as nations beget or extend languages, and while English has flourished longer in America than anywhere else, there are other lands awaiting the same historical lexicography [as the new "Dictionary of American English"]. It will soon be the turn of Australia and New Zealand, and of South Africa."—"Times Literary Supplement" (London), 26 April 1941.

22 For instance, *wusser*, "a bad person, a ne'er-do-well", *wissere*, "a

teacher", *whizz*, "a fussy, troublesome person", *waw*, "to whine, grumble, complain".

23 Due largely to E. E. Morris, who gave the story number one position in his theories concerning the origin of *larrikin*, the Australian—who is a great believer in what he sees in print—has held to the apocryphal legend that an Irish policeman's broad pronunciation of *larking* gave us the term as we know it today. Skeat's warning, that "as a rule, derivations which re-

lifted this word out of obscure dialect into popular use, and from popular use in this country it was passed back to the country of its origin without the English being aware of what had taken place. Thus the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" in its 1911 edition:

Australia . . . as may be seen from the novels of Rolf Boldrewood and other writers, possesses an ample store of slang peculiar to itself, but of this *larrikin* is the only word that has found its way into general use in the mother country.

Murray's "Oxford Dictionary" throws no more light on its history than to remark that the term is "Of uncertain origin; possibly from *Larry* (a nickname for Lawrence, common in Ireland) + *kin*".

The problem was thrashed out, however, early this century and the history of the word has been told many times since. Here is a succinct version of the case as published in "The Lone Hand" in 1908²⁴:

Of all Australian words perhaps none has been the subject of so much discussion as *larrikin*. The most generally accepted explanation of its origin is the Irish policeman's pronunciation of "larking", and doubtless, this indicates the true affinities of the word. But whatever its ultimate origin, *larrikin* has come to us, not from the tongue of the Irishman, but from the Englishman of the provinces. The Yorkshireman uses *larrack* for careless, and says of a giddy, frolic-loving person that he "goas *larracking* about". These words come close enough; but in Dr Jago's "Glossary of the Cornish Dialect" (1882),²⁵ we find the very term itself: "*Larrikins*: Mischievous young fellows, larkers", together with a quotation from a Penzance newspaper, which speaks of "mischievous *larrikins* who pull the young trees down". After this it is rather amusing to read the declaration of Messrs Barrère and Leland²⁶ that "larrikin", as used in colloquial English, is "imported from Australia".

Here, then, is the crux of the problem. If *wowser* and *larrikin*

quire a story to be told turn out to be false", was repeated by Morris, but footnotes to satisfying stories are rarely read and the legend still thrives.

²⁴ 2 December 1908, p. 115. The story was also told by A. G. Stephens and S. O'Brien in their "Material for a Dictionary of Australian Slang", 1900-10 (MS. in Mitchell Library, Sydney), and by E. J. Forbes in an article entitled "On the Larrikin's Trail", published in the Sydney "Telegraph" of 18 June 1908.

A sound hint on the origin of the term was also given in the supplement to "Webster's International Dictionary" of 1898, wherein the origin was suggested as being related to the provincial English *larrick* lively, careless, and *larack*, to frolic or romp.

²⁵ Dr F. W. P. Jago, of Plymouth "Ancient Language and Dialect of Cornwall" (1882).

²⁶ "A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant" (1897).

came to us from English dialect—and there are many other words we acquired in the same way²⁷: *cobber*, *dinkum*, *fossick*, *barrack* and *swagman* to name but a few—what right have we to regard them as Australianisms? And, quite apart from that question, can we class them as slang since they obviously have dialectal histories?

In so far as they touch Australia and New Zealand these questions represent what is, in fact, a single problem.

Dialect is essentially a localized form of language, with local peculiarities of vocabulary and diction. It is the possession of a few, but it is none the less part of the vast body of language, and as such is subject to modifications no less than that part of English we are pleased to regard as "standard". If, therefore, we take a term out of this localized dialect and toss it into what Mencken describes as "the gaping maw of the proletariat", we place it in possession of a vast concourse of people who will have small, if any, knowledge of its localized application. Its meaning and application inevitably tend to change, and since the broadening process consequent upon its absorption into popular speech will produce new non-standardized connotations, that word will, for the time being at least, be classed as unorthodox and its absorption into literary and social language will be resisted. If its usefulness grows—if, for instance, it describes something in a way more succinct and pungent than any other term we have at our disposal—it will graduate swiftly from unorthodox speech to approved speech. It will no longer be presented in print with the taint of quotation marks upon it.

Wowser, *larrikin*, *cobber*, *dinkum*, *to barrack*—these are in the "Oxford Dictionary" and classed as Australian along with many scores more terms that are either indigenous or have found a new lease of life through Australia.²⁸

²⁷ See Chapter XVI, section I.

²⁸ With some notable exceptions most of the terms listed by Morris in his "Austral English" have been incorporated in the big "Oxford Dictionary". A certain lack of logic is shown, however, in the Australianisms selected for inclusion in the "Shorter Oxford Dictionary". In this work we find, among others, *willy willy*, *buck-jump*, *cooe*, *sun-downer*, *hatter*, *cornstalk*, *boundary-rider*, *bluey*, *jackeroo*, *stockrider*, *to roll up*, *googly* and *shanghai*; but

we find the obsolete *burster* and not *Southerly buster*, *roustabout* and not *rouseabout*; and there is no trace of *digger* (soldier), *jumbuck* or *brumby* among many other long-established terms. In the "Concise Oxford Dictionary" the principal Australianisms listed are: *larrikin*, *buckjump*, *squatter*, *billy*, *sun-downer*, *fossick*, *stockman* and several associated terms, *bushranger*, and *googly*. Scores of indigenous Australian expressions have as much claim to inclusion as these.

"Nearly all slang," observes Partridge,²⁹ "consists of old words changed in form or, far more often, old words with new meanings or new shades of meaning." This should give us an answer to our question about dialectal importations. We can be justified in accepting as an Australianism any term original to this country or any term out of the English or American language to which we have given a fresh shade of meaning. Whether we regard such terms as slang, however, depends on our opinion as to their orthodoxy or unorthodoxy.

If we require as an imprimatur of approval the admission of a term to that holy of holies, the "Oxford Dictionary", we will face some knotty problems.

For example, the Oxford "Supplement" gives *chink*, a Chinaman, as "originally U.S. slang" and the first textual quotation offered is 1901. But *chink* was used in Australia³⁰ many years before America got hold of it. We may not like the sound of *chink*, but if the Oxford authorities pass it, does that make everything all right? If they also list *chow* for a Chinaman and the first use was also in Australia³¹ is that all right, too? And *John Chinaman*, if that is on Oxford record and also has an earlier Australian reference than any found elsewhere³² are we to accept it as good orthodox speech? And if they include such Australianisms as *forty*, a sharper, *duck-shoving*, unfair methods of business adopted by cabmen, and *bonzer*, good, excellent, are we to feel complacent about these terms and to dismiss with contempt *nineteener*, *touching off*, and *bosker* (which have the same respective uses as the three previous words) because they are not in the "Oxford Dictionary"?

It is clear that the Oxford yardstick is not entirely satisfactory, magnificent though that work is. The question is not that words like *nineteener*, *touching off* and *bosker* have never been in print in Australia, whereas the other three have. *Nineteener* was recorded by Cornelius Crowe in his "Australian Slang Dictionary"

²⁹ "Slang Today and Yesterday", p. 22.

³⁰ By W. J. Barry in "Up and Down" (1879), p. 51.

³¹ The "Supplement's" first textual reference for *chow* is from C. J. Dennis's "Ginger Mick" (1916). It was used nearly thirty years earlier in Australia: cf. "Bulletin", 14 April 1888, p. 8, col. 2, and 7 July

1888, p. 8, col. 3. The form *chow-chow* was used similarly by E. Howe, "Boy in the Bush" (1869), p. 215.

³² "Sydney Revels of Bacchus, Cupid and Momus", by C. A. Corbyn (1854), p. 125. He also uses the form *John*. The first Oxford texts for these expressions are 1872 and 1873 respectively.

of 1895, *touching off* by a writer in 1898, *bosker* in the "Bulletin" in 1906.

We are right in saying that *nineteener* and *touching off* are rare terms, but so are *forty* and *duck-shoving*; and we would be right in saying that *bonzer* is used more frequently than *bosker*, but this has not always been the case. At the beginning of this century *bosker* and its variant *boshter* were a good deal more popular.

It becomes clear that we need some better starting point than Murray's "Dictionary". We have to work out the problem from the viewpoint of Australia, not from the viewpoint of England and of the judgment she passed upon our language because she did not know it as well as we do. The Oxford authorities are not altogether to blame for their cross-eyed view of our language. They looked through the spectacles of Morris,³³ who saw only a fragment of the picture, and of a few more academicians who no more than scratched the surface of the subject. If they had had the requisite help, the Oxford authorities would have done a great deal better by Austral English than they did.

In the introduction to his dictionary, Morris records that Dr Murray "several years ago invited assistance from this end of the world for words and uses of words peculiar to Australasia, or to parts of it". This was a genuine plea for help and the Oxford philologists—working, it must be remembered, 12,000 miles from Australasian speech—did their best to treat our language fairly.

If we class as slang every Australian term that sounds strange

³³ Here, in part, is what the "Bulletin" had to say (18 December 1897) about Morris's "Austral English": "The Dictionary is misleading. Even an Australian is liable to be put wrong: a foreigner can hardly go right. This is because Mr Morris, with a stupidity certainly unexpected in a man of his attainment, has included (a) obsolete or obsolescent words without the least hint to show that they are not in daily use like their next-column neighbours; has included (b) words of limited use in a particular Australian district without the least hint to show that they are not used like their next-column neighbours throughout Australia; (c) has curi-

ously failed, in some important instances, to supply adequate definitions and (d) has supplied some definitions altogether erroneous. . . . As a guide to Australian language, the Dictionary is worthless except to an Australian expert who can supplement with local knowledge the makers' numerous errors and omissions."

From the "Sydney Morning Herald", 1 January 1898: ". . . It is evident that the editor (i.e. Morris) has tried to make the most of his subject and has included a vast number of words that hardly strike one as being distinctive enough to be entitled to a place in these pages."

to English ears, practically the complete body of our language will fall into that category. If we are going to set a time limit on the subject and declare that all Australian terms without a history of, say, at least twenty-five years are slang—irrespective of whether they have been in print or not—the result will be hopeless confusion, since obviously a good deal of the language tossed up by our social growth over a century was ephemeral, while many expressions that have become established in the last quarter-century are here to stay.

Nor can we rely solely on instinct to tell us what is slang and what is not.

Only a few years ago, following the Intermediate Certificate Examination in New South Wales, the examiners reported³⁴ that essays written by the children were "often marred by colloquialisms, and even slang".

Among the lapses from grace noted by the officials were: *eats*,³⁵ for *eatables*; *windy*, for *winding*; *chap*³⁶; *bloke*; *have a go*; a *lend*,³⁷ for a loan; *care a hoot*; *sling off at*; *roared him up*.

There was clearly a difference of opinion between the teachers and the children (and you could probably count the parents on the children's side) as to what constituted good English. The examiners declared:

Candidates should understand that when they are asked to express their thoughts on a given subject, they are expected to write the best English of which they are capable. Essays are a test, not merely of the construction and development of a theme, but also of the adequacy and appositeness of the vocabulary used.

On this basis men like Shakespeare and Ben Jonson would be well marked down in the Intermediate. Here is a little of the slang used by Shakespeare: *dry*, dull; *tester*, sixpence; *clay-brained*, stupid; *lob*, a country bumpkin; *geck*, a fool; *fap*, drunk; *lifter*, a thief; *nut-hook*, a constable. And some of Jon-

³⁴ "The Education Gazette", N.S.W., 1 July 1939, p. 188.

³⁵ Henry Sweet, in his "Anglo-Saxon Reader", gives the *circa* 1000 A.D. use by Ælfric of this plural form: "Moyses . . . *ætes* ne gimde on eallum ðam fyrste"—which should provide a reasonably satisfactory precedent for its revival, with the U.S.A. first in the field, during the past half century.

³⁶ Used for "fellow or person" since the early eighteenth century.

³⁷ A use anticipated in Scottish and north English dialect. In Sir James Balfour's "Practicks: or a System of the More Ancient Law of Scotland", *circa* 1575 (published in 1754), the following use appears: "Quhat is ane *lenne*, and of the restitution thairof."

son's uses: *smelt*, a simpleton; *clap*, noise or clatter; *circling boy*, a crook or sharper; *puckfist*, a braggart; *kit*, a fiddle.

The odd academic or pseudo-academic fixation that there is a definable something called good English which is pure and beautiful and eternal, and that everything else is bad English—and accordingly trivial, ugly and ephemeral—has grown out of man's puny illusion that he can stop evolution in its tracks.

Good English is a fiction beloved of littérateurs, smatterers and pundits. It is a clumsy misshapen monster patched up by all the petty Frankensteins who infest classrooms and pulpits and rostrums and who think that because they open their mouths and words come out they are thereby authorities on speech.

This question of good English is not one of grammar or syntax; it is a matter of words. And it is not simply a matter of words, but of certain fashions in words. What one person or group of persons regards as objectionable, others accept without question.³⁸ Horace and Martial and Aristophanes used the slang of their day without hesitation; so did Chaucer and the Elizabethans; so did Congreve and Smollett; so did James Joyce; so do those vivid Americans, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Faulkner, Saroyan. There are, of course, other writers like Swift, Addison, Goldsmith and Johnson who avoid all forms of colloquial speech.

Are we to say that Swift is right and Shakespeare is wrong? Can we say that only good English—that is, a form of language sterilized against colloquialisms and slang—makes good literature?

The question answers itself with a decided negative.

In tackling Australianisms, therefore, a considerable tolerance is necessary. It is not sufficient for us to accept the view of Dickens who, when writing of Australian additions to the English language in 1853, remarked: "What are they, till they are marshalled in a dictionary, but slang?" A dozen and more dictionaries have been published with Australianisms in them, but this does not necessarily make them standard English or even standard Australian.

Webster's "International Dictionary" of 1898 devoted a special supplement to Australian expressions, among them *Bananaland*, *boxer*, *cronk*, *super*, *whaler*, *bush telegraph*. The "Modern Standard English Dictionary"³⁹ of 1939 included as Australian: *put on the acid*, *stoush*, *yike*, *sheila*, *do a perish* and *shelf*.

³⁸ "Slang always horrifies a few sensitive spirits, yet it ends by being respectable."—G. Sampson in his introduction to R. C. Trench's

"On the Study of Words".

³⁹ Published by Odhams Press, London.

It is impossible to class all of these as colloquialisms or standard Australianisms. Many Australians may never have heard *shelf*, *whaler*, *yike* or *super* in use. They may never have seen them in print before.

Since they are generally known and indispensable to us, in so far as they displace clumsy equivalents, words like *squatter*, *stockwhip*, *boundary-rider*, *S.P. betting*, *digger*, *willy willy*, *bowyangs* and *Anzac*, must be regarded as either standard or near-standard Australianisms. They will be standard to the extent that we could not sacrifice them without losing some vital part of our vocabulary, but they will probably be regarded as colloquial by many people because our fragmentary 150-odd years of history have scarcely given us enough confidence in our own existence to feel that we have a national identity. That is a hurdle we will climb over in due course.

We will have little hesitation in classing terms like *anabranche*, *billabong*, *woolshed*, *blackfellow*, *lerp*, *Australorp* and *Australianism* as standard. They have sunk their roots into our language and cannot possibly be pried loose.

Our argument will not be with this type of expression, but with that vast body of our language falling into the grouping of Australian slang which we will have to define as follows: Australian slang is that part of the Australian dialect (i.e. all the expressions that have acquired localized connotations in this country or have been invented by us) which, although it may be known and/or current throughout Australia and have found its way into print, has never been used as a matter of course by all classes of Australians.

As will be seen, a great deal of this slang deserves a slightly better classification. I add this reservation because "the term slang itself represents for many people the evidence of an unspeakable taint.

The author of "Australian Etiquette" (1885) was precise on the matter:

All slang is vulgar. It lowers the tone of society and the standard of thought. It is a great mistake to suppose that slang is in any manner witty. Only the very young or the uncultivated so consider it. . . . The woman who exclaims, "The Dickens!" or "Mercy!" or "Goodness!" when she is annoyed or astonished is as vulgar in spirit, though perhaps not quite so regarded by society, as though she had used expressions which it would require but little stretch of the imagination to be regarded as profane.

This book has nothing to do with social pretences of this type.

We are looking at a living language, virile and colourful, and as richly Australian as the environment in which we live.

To the philistines who still talk of England as *Home*,⁴⁰ though they have lived in Australia all their lives, and who scorn things Australian because they happen to belong to this country, the words of Norman Bartlett⁴¹ are a reminder that there are native horizons:

Australians need to be increasingly aware of themselves as a people with distinct characteristics and distinct duties towards themselves and others. . . . The Australian future should be worked out as a natural extension of Australian characteristics, an expression of our robust, sardonic, masculine egalitarianism.

The "more English than the English" cliché has done much to retard the cultural development of New Zealand. It has also affected Australia, but to a less extent. In this part of the world a powerful literature is waiting to be written, and it will not be written so long as writers hesitate to accommodate themselves to their own environment and to speak in terms of that environment.

We can look back over the brief history of Australian literature and see that much has already been done to make use of Australian idiom. Boldrewood, Marcus Clarke, Lawson, Paterson, Louis Stone, A. H. Davis, Tom Collins, Sorenson, Dennis, Norman Lindsay, Xavier Herbert, Ernestine Hill, Kylie Tennant, Brian Penton, Eve Langley, Gavin Casey, Frank Dalby Davison, Henrietta Drake-Brockman, Vance Palmer, Miles Franklin—most of these are competent exponents of our idiom. Much of their success in portraying Australians has been built on the fact that they allow their characters to speak naturally and not with imported accents. In Part III detailed examination is made of some of the works of these writers and the idiom employed.

The deft use of idiom—and by that term is implied any of the vernacular forms that are known variously as slang, colloquialism, dialect or argot—is one of the soundest methods of obtaining literary authenticity. It helps to fix the identity of

⁴⁰ This *Home* cliché has taken a long time to die. In 1854, Corbyn, "Sydney Revels of Bacchus, Cupid and Momus", gave us a police magistrate saying to a person who had used the expression: "You may call it [i.e. England] *at home*, but

we Currency lads call it *abroad* and this is our home!"

⁴¹ "There's a Boom in Australian Books!" by Norman Bartlett, Sydney "Sunday Telegraph", 19 October 1941.

a story with extraordinary accuracy. When we read, for instance, in Kylie Tennant's "Tiburón",⁴² which is an essentially Australian story: "She's had as many farewells as a trans-Atlantic liner" we almost immediately ask ourselves: Why trans-Atlantic and not trans-Pacific liner? The author's entire novel is focused on this part of the world; why, for the sake of a simple simile, should we be suddenly projected into the northern hemisphere? It is not that the use of trans-Pacific instead of trans-Atlantic will help to augment the idea behind the simile, but it will certainly not diminish that idea and it will, moreover, preserve the environmental identity of the story. We could quite as well say: "She's had as many farewells as an ocean liner" and leave it at that. We don't gain much by adding trans-Atlantic. Why, therefore, shouldn't we be content with trans-Pacific? And anyway, why should we call on old-world clichés when we can refurbish figures of speech by applying them to our own environment? A similar environmental lapse occurs in Robert S. Close's Australian short story "The Book", published in "Coast to Coast" (1942). He refers to "freckles as big as cents".

Just on 140 years ago the word *bush* was applied for the first time to the gum and scrub forests of Australia,⁴³ but it was more than thirty years before it ousted the traditional English "woods" and "forest". Today we no longer find those words interchangeable. The concept of *bush* is something entirely different from the concept of "woods" or "forest", and in any case we have broadened our use of *bush* to apply to the country and outback in general⁴⁴ which gives it a meaning entirely remote from any known use of "woods" or "forest".

Here the matter is not one of a simile, but of a straightforward use of terms. We will not be greatly put out by the use of trans-Atlantic instead of trans-Pacific, but we will certainly know in an instant that a writer who speaks of *woods* instead of *bush* either does not know his Australia or is not writing about Australia.

Here is Christopher Brennan⁴⁵ speaking:

⁴² 1935, p. 283.

⁴³ First recorded in the adjectival form *bush native*: 1801, letter by Geo. Caley, 25 August (in Bladen's "Historical Records of N.S.W.", vol. iv). Used as a noun in Sydney "Gazette", 17 April 1803, p. 3.

⁴⁴ The French use of *la Brousse* in New Caledonia should be noted,

since this application to any part of the country remote from the capital, Noumea, is taken directly from Australia. The French also use the expression *aller la brousse*, which is a translated form of the Australian *to go bush*.

⁴⁵ Christopher John Brennan, poet and scholar, 1870-1932.

Once I could sit by the fire hourlong when the dripping eaves
sang cheer to the shelter'd, and listen, and know that the woods drank full,
and think of the morn that was coming . . .

We are not likely to feel confident that Brennan is writing about Australia here. H. M. Green has remarked in a lecture⁴⁶ on Brennan:

He looked down upon the rather provincial Australian nationalism of his day, and asserted once [in an interview with J. J. Quinn in the Sydney "Mail", 9 June 1909], with poetic exaggeration, that so far as national traits went, he might have made his verse in China.

Green has shown, however, that in a number of ways Brennan's poetry is recognizably Australian, which is perhaps evidence that, in spite of himself, Brennan could not evade his own identity or disguise it.

It must be clear that if a writer desires to write about Australia and the people in it, he will be starting off on the wrong foot if he calls our bush "forest" or a bushwhacker a "woodcutter" or a squatter a "squire". A comprehensive knowledge of our idiom is necessary before a work of Australian fiction becomes fully authentic. We are not seeking idiom of the "bonzer-dinkum-strike-me-up-a-gumtree" brand, because, in the first place, that is hackneyed, dull stuff, and in the second place it has to be used sparingly in order to avoid self-consciousness. No, the idiom we require has nothing strained about it, because it is the language of everyday life—the language we hear spoken in trains or trams, on street corners, at home or in the outback, in Tennant Creek or Brisbane, Newcastle or Fremantle. This is the Australian speaking. He does not say *bonzer* in every other sentence, or *stone the crows!* or *who's robbing this coach?* He might not use the word *dinkum* for months on end. But he says other things, and we will do him an injustice if we present him to the world as a fellow using a few dull colloquialisms *ad nauseam*, without sufficient wit or imagination to renovate them or augment them or to push them aside when they become stale.

Many Australasian writers seem to have felt the impermanence of their homeland, the formlessness of its tradition; they have seen no character in their fellows because they have felt no character in themselves; they have felt rootless because their

⁴⁶ Christopher Brennan, Two Popular Lectures Delivered for the Australian English Association (1939).

thoughts were continually projected to Places Where Things Happen—and that has often meant, for the antipodean mind, Great Britain.

Australia has the advantage over New Zealand of an additional half-century's existence, and that half-century is represented by something more than population or industrial growth. It is represented by the solidification of the Australian character.

In literature, New Zealand stands today roughly where Australia stood in 1890. Her writers are just beginning to exploit their own country. They are opening their eyes and finding, after all, that there is something about New Zealand different from Australia, America or England. But in fifty years' time there will still be many New Zealand writers who find their country characterless, just as there are many Australians today who find no character in this country, just as there were many Americans at the beginning of last century who could find no character in the United States.

It is a question of time. The irresistible will of the people to create and preserve an existence unique to themselves will do the rest. But to wait in the centre of the tramtracks for life to run over us is a foolish occupation. The material is here. We should anticipate our destiny.

3.—EARLY STUDENTS OF OUR SLANG

In 1890⁴⁷ the "Bulletin" published the following paragraph: "A Maryborough (Q.) Chinaman refuses to send his children to the State School on the grounds that there they learn too much slang."

Those were days—just on a half-century ago, it should be noted—when it was becoming apparent that Australia had already made a considerable impression on the English language, and when lexicographers were busy trying to catch up with it. We were, of course, to hear many times in the succeeding fifty years that Australian slang was "thin and meagre" or imported from America. Even "The Lone Hand" of 2 November 1908 said, "The discovery and colonization of this country has added remarkably few words to the English language". But to people who knew the subject, Australian slang was something tangible and well worth examination. A writer in Sydney "Truth" of 12 January 1896 commented:

⁴⁷ 9 August 1890, p. 15.

It cannot be doubted that many slang words which have been born, or have passed through several stages of evolution, under the Southern Cross, will eventually lose the taint of illegitimacy and become "good dictionary English". If, every now and then, in the course of a generation, these vagrant parts of speech were rounded up and their origin traced, an inestimable service would be rendered the philologist of the future.

Perhaps it could be noted here that a dictionary of slang was compiled in Australia before America produced one. This was the "Vocabulary of the Flash Language" compiled in 1812 at Newcastle by a convict named James Hardy Vaux⁴⁸ during what he describes as his "solitary hours of cessation from hard labour". This is a dictionary of English cant, but it provides what must be a fairly accurate picture of the type of language used in Australia during the first decade or so of last century.

There is not much in it that could be described as authentically Australian, but there is a good deal that serves as a pointer for the way our language was to go.

For instance, Vaux gives *awake*, "to see through or comprehend".⁴⁹ Partridge omits it from his historical "Slang Dictionary", thereby apparently dismissing it from any currency in England. But we find the term surviving in Australia in the form which comedian Roy Rene (Mo) did much to popularize: "I'm a *wake-up* to you!"—I'm up to your tricks, I can see through you!

Of the word *chum* Vaux provides the note: "A fellow prisoner in a jail, hulk, etc. So there are *new chums* and *old chums* as they happen to have been a short or a long time in confinement."

From this use was developed our application of *new chum* to a new immigrant (1839) and to an inexperienced worker in the outback (1848), together with such derivatives as *new chumism* (1854) and *new chumhood* (1883).

He defined *gray* as a halfpenny or any other coin having two heads or tails. We use the term in two-up slang today for a two-tailed penny. He listed *hog*, a shilling, which we have clipped to *og* or *ogg*, *push*, "a concourse of people, a crowd", which graduated to a notable position in larrikin slang as the equivalent of "gang"; and *leary* for "fly", cunning or alert, which we have converted into *lairy* with a different meaning.

After Vaux there was a gap of nearly seventy years until the

⁴⁸ Included in his "Memoirs" (1819).

⁴⁹ In the senses "vigilant, alert" it is standard English.

next dictionary of slang was put together in Australia.⁵⁰ As to the person responsible for it no clue can be given; we are even uncertain when it was published.⁵¹ The little book is entitled "The Australian Slang Dictionary". A copy in my possession has the following words on its cover: "The Detectives' Handbook. Slang Phrases comprising all the Quaint Slang Words and Flash Dialogues in use in the Australian shadows of Life. Sporting, Stage and Gambling Slang, Low Life Glimpses, etc. The Most Curious Work ever issued in Australia." The publisher was H. J. Franklin, Sydney. A copy of the dictionary is in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, lacking covers and bearing on its front page the date in ink "2/3/82". Beyond the evidence in the book itself that it was compiled in the early 1880s there is no information.

Much of its contents is English slang—perhaps not more than one-fifth is Australian. But once again we are given valuable information on the way our language was going.

Here we find *Johnny Warder*, "an idle drunkard who hangs about pub corners looking for a drink—called after a publican named John Ward who formerly kept a low house in Sydney noted for that species", who was probably the father, or at any rate a cousin, of our *Jimmy Woodser*. We find *bart* for a girl, which was later displaced by *cliner* and *donah*, and later still by *sheila*. We find the English cant term *moskeneer*, to pawn, which survives in Australia today in the phrase *gone to Moscow*, which has nothing to do with the Soviet capital, but which simply means "pawned". We find *on the wallaby* for "on a drinking bout in town", which gives us a new angle on the phrase; we find *ponce*, "a degraded man who lives on a woman", which we have converted into *punce* (or *poonce*) and given a different meaning; we find *rest*, a year's jail, *snooze*, three months' jail, and *dream*, six months' jail; we find *sheen*, *shug*, *sug* and *spons* for money.

In short we are given enough evidence to show that our slang and colloquial speech were advancing rapidly. That in this and succeeding dictionaries a good deal of slang was included that was not and never has been Australian must be regarded

⁵⁰ The first English dictionary to include Australian expressions was J. C. Hotten's "Slang Dictionary", 1873 edition, which listed *bale up* (for bail up), *blackbirding*, *cooey* (for cooee), *currency* (as opposed to

sterling, as Australian-born and English-born inhabitants were known respectively), *gully rakers*, *swag*, ("luggage carried by diggers") and *wallabee track*.

⁵¹ Possibly published in Sydney.

not only as bad workmanship, but doubly unfortunate in that it encouraged unbelievers to persist in their conviction that our slang had little originality in it.

Enthusiasts though they undoubtedly were for the cause of local slang, both Lentzner⁵² and Crowe,⁵³ who were next in the slang field, did us considerable damage in the eyes both of Australians and the English.

Lentzner had an intelligent enough approach to his subject, but his execution was bad. Of Australian slang (and what he thought was Australian slang) he wrote:

These eccentric forms of expression are for the most part of modern origin, invented because they were absolutely needed, or because they expressed some idea more ingeniously, sententiously and amusingly than others had done.

The "Bulletin"⁵⁴ comment on Lentzner's work provides a fair statement:

The illustrations given of Australian slang are very funny for the most part, and where they are exact and authentic, the source, in nine cases out of ten, is inaccurately stated.

About Crowe's "Slang Dictionary" of 1895 the "Bulletin"⁵⁵ was even more severe—and not without reason, for Crowe was a Melbourne police officer who should have been able to do a much better job, while Lentzner was a foreigner who had lived only a few years in this country:

"The Australian Slang Dictionary" is an amazingly ignorant production. The author has mixed up an olla podrida of linguistic scraps picked up everywhere—most of which are either not Australian or not slang—and enriched it with little bits of his own. The spelling is atrocious and the definitions are worse.

Again the criticism was justified, although Crowe had admitted that "very few of the terms it [i.e. the dictionary] contains have been invented by Australians".

To the good Australian word *barracker* he gives the definition: "One using low language to aid his party", and of *barrikin* he writes: "Coarse language used by roughs in applauding their party in a contest". He makes no mention of *bingy*, or *binjey*,

⁵² "Wörterbuch der englischen Volkssprache Australiens."

⁵⁴ 30 January 1892.

⁵⁵ 17 August 1895.

⁵³ "The Australian Slang Dictionary."

from the aboriginal, meaning stomach, but gives it instead as "a term used in the butter trade, meaning bad butter", which is straight out of English dialect.

He tells us that *bloody* is "a word used very often inadvertently by the uneducated"; that *shaler* (instead of *sheila*) means a girl; that a *squirt* is a revolver; that *Yarra bankers* are "vagrants living on the banks of the Yarra"; that *Tom Collins* is "a fellow about town whom many sought to kill for touching them on sore points; he always managed to vanish before his destroyers as he was imaginary".

In short the dictionary is pretty much of a mixture, valuable in parts, trivial in others.

It might have been expected that a man with the enthusiastic approach to language that E. E. Morris, of Melbourne, possessed, would have found some usefulness in the dictionaries mentioned above—not much, perhaps, but enough to give him a guide in putting Australia's lexicographical house in order. But Morris was either ignorant of them, or did not care to check them over to see what was indigenous and what was not. He dismisses Crowe in a couple of lines, and does not mention the other works.

Yet in his presidential address before the fourth meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (Literature and Fine Arts Section) held in Hobart in January 1892, when he urged that a body of investigators should compile a dictionary of Austral English, he admitted that ". . . even slang, being the speech of the people, is not undeserving of some scientific study".

Morris's suggestion for organized research appears to have been made hastily. He made no concrete proposals as to how the work might be accomplished apart from noting that "twenty or thirty men and women, each undertaking to read certain books with the new dictionary in mind, and to note in a prescribed fashion what is peculiar [to Australasia], could accomplish all that is needed". He concluded his address with the lame comment, "Of course, we are all horribly busy . . .", which was probably as good a reason as any why Morris's dictionary was an incomplete, out-of-balance work that scarcely scratched the surface of the subject.

Through the reverse telescope of time we have tended to see his dictionary a little out of focus. In the first place it was

more a catalogue of flora and fauna⁵⁶ than a dictionary. What little there is of "standard" Australianisms, colloquialisms and slang, is often overloaded with unnecessary textual quotations. Moreover, he included a good deal of the trivial,⁵⁷ while omitting much that was important, largely, it must be imagined, because he did not familiarize himself with the language of the people.⁵⁸ In principal, however, Morris was correct. He set out to record Australianisms, give definitions, origins, dates and textual quotations along the lines laid down by the "Oxford Dictionary" authorities. As a source of reference his work is the best of its kind that Australasia possesses, but that does not mean it is either complete or adequate. It is a valuable addition to Australiana, but no more complete than, say, J. H. Heaton's "Australian Dictionary of Dates" (1879) or D. Blair's "Cyclopaedia of Australasia" (1881) in their respective fields.

Morris tells us that in the early 1890s the New York publishers, Funk and Wagnall, included numerous Australasian terms in their "Standard Dictionary". Among their lapses were: *beauregarde*, for *budgerigar*; *swagman*, with a definition "a

⁵⁶ His listing of flora and fauna is both out-of-date and inadequate in many instances. In reviewing Morris's book, the "Australasian" of 22 January 1898 (p. 217) wrote: "We should say that fully half of the book is more of the nature of a cyclopaedia of natural history than a dictionary proper. As a compendious account of the fauna and flora of Australia it will be found useful, but it rather overloads the more strictly philological portion of the book."

⁵⁷ He includes such terms, for instance, as *fist it*, to eat with the hands; *tannergrams*, sixpenny telegrams; *to run round rings* instead of *to run rings round*; *patriot*, "humorously applied to convicts"; *mihanerè*, "a Maori variant of the English word missionary"—a lone and irrelevant example of Maori pidgin; *wakiki*, "the shell money of the South Sea Islands"—another irrelevant term far beyond the intended scope of the work; *government*, "a not unusual contraction of 'Government service', used by contractors and working men".

⁵⁸ Evidence that Morris felt some need to recognize Australian popular language is shown by his inclusion of a number of slang terms—without dates or textual quotations—but his selection of these terms is so haphazard that it represents anything but an adequate cross-section of Australian slang in the 1890s. It is the academician's cross-section of our life—ill-balanced, incomplete and unrepresentative: *butcher*, "South Australian slang for a long drink of beer"; *Cobb*, "sometimes used as equivalent to a coach"; *cronk*, "used of a horse run crookedly"; *dead bird*, "a certainty"; *to be (or come) down*, "to fail in a University examination"; *nut*, "a daredevil"; *Jo-Jo*, "a name used by Melbourne larrikins for a man with a good deal of hair on his face". It is clear from an examination of his material, that Morris dismissed Australian slang and colloquialism—"the element is comparatively small" in Austral English, he wrote—because he was ignorant of its scope, and made no more than a half-hearted attempt to acquaint himself with it.

dealer in cheap trinkets"; *taihoa*, wait! quoted from Tasmania instead of from New Zealand.

A much better job was done by "Webster's International Dictionary" in 1898, when a special supplement devoted to Australasian expressions was added to the work. This supplement, compiled by Joshua Lake, of Cambridge, ranks as one of the best of its kind yet published. It gives a representative cross-section of Australasian speech, avoids overloading with flora and fauna, and—although it is not always correct—gives us a much better taste of indigenous slang and colloquialism than Morris does. The editor says:

The vocabulary might easily have been doubled in size, but only such words, phrases, and usages have been admitted as are already well settled or seem likely to persist. Local words and usages are specially designated. Many of these, however, will unquestionably extend their boundaries in the immediate future.

In subsequent editions of "Webster's Dictionary" this supplement lost its identity, such words as the lexicographers chose to include from Australasia being merged with the main body of the work. Lake was the first to suggest the English dialectal origins of *barrack*, *larrikin* and *fossick*; he noted *spieler*, *penner* and *tarboy* (woolshed terms), *coppertail* and *bushy* (the noun), which, among others, Morris had ignored. In short, he took the study of our language a step further. The "Bulletin" of 27 May 1899 commented as follows:

An extra-special merit of the new Webster is its Australian supplement. There is a list of local words and phrases—not complete by any means and open to many cavils, but very helpful. . . .

About this time Australian slang was finding its way into English slang dictionaries with scarcely satisfying results. In 1873 a few Australianisms had crept into J. C. Hotten's "Slang Dictionary". There were still more in the "Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant" (1897).⁵⁹ Barrère and Leland and Farmer and Henley followed the lead with dictionaries peppered with Australian terms. Unfortunately these works are full of errors.

Of the "Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant" the "Bulletin" complained (after quoting a few examples):

Isn't it awful! And so it goes on throughout the dictionary—ignorant or misleading explanations of actual slang; disquisitions on imaginary ditto;

⁵⁹ London: George Bell.

attributions to all Australia of expressions which, a dozen years ago, had temporary vogue in a limited district—backed up and enforced by scores of references to D. B. W. Sladen's reminiscences, or quotations from his unspeakable verse! . . . One can only hope that the historian of the period will be able to refer to this notice (it is written to that end) and authoritatively contradict the philologist [responsible for this dictionary].

There is a good case in point in the alleged indigenous expression *Australian grip*, "a hearty handshake". It was recorded originally by Lentzner, repeated in the dictionary just mentioned, included by Farmer and Henley in their "Dictionary of Slang",⁶⁰ and by Partridge in his "Slang Dictionary",⁶¹ yet I have never seen it in print outside a dictionary, nor have I heard it used.

It was the feeling that Australasia had been given a raw deal by the lexicographers that prompted A. G. Stephens and S. O'Brien to start compiling an authentic dictionary of our slang and colloquialisms. Stephens was at the time book-critic of the "Bulletin" and he realized, perhaps better than any other man of his period, that there was a good deal more to the subject than Morris, Lake, Crowe and their kind were disposed to believe. What originally inspired him to take up the cause of Australianisms was almost certainly his disappointment with Morris's "Austral English".⁶² Almost immediately after the book was published, the "Bulletin" embarked on a campaign to collect items of indigenous slang and idiom, and throughout 1899 the Red Page⁶³ was liberally sprinkled with contributions sent in from all parts of Australasia.

In Chapter XVII detailed comment is made on the "Bulletin's" influence on the evolution of our slang and to the encouragement it gave Australian writers to use our idiom. It is perhaps the largest and most influential single factor that has been brought to bear on colloquial speech in the history of the English language. At the period of its greatest influence—between 1885 and 1900—it represented more power, in terms of national culture, than any journal in England and America.

⁶⁰ London: Routledge and Sons (1905).

⁶¹ London: Routledge and Sons (1938).

⁶² Stephens wrote the critique of "Austral English" from which quotations have already been made.

⁶³ The Red Page is the inside front cover of the "Bulletin", named

from the colour of the covers. It acquired its present nature in 1895 when critical notices displaced book advertisements. The first use of the title was "For the Red Page" on 22 August 1896. This became "The Red Page" in the succeeding issue, and, except for a few issues when the title was changed to "Under the Gumtree", has remained ever since.

Stephens and O'Brien made an intimate study of Australian idiom. It was unfortunate that their researches remained in typescript,⁶⁴ for they would have served (though they suffered from the inclusion of certain non-Australian elements) as a counter-balance to allegations that Australian idiom was thin and meagre, tottering paltrily to extinction beneath an avalanche of Americanisms.

In the 1904 edition of "Webster's International Dictionary"—though, as already stated, the Supplement was by then not exclusively Australasian—allusion is made to "the rich contribution of words and meanings peculiar to Australasia" and to the fact that "the wonderful development of this branch of the English-speaking race has had its natural accompaniment in the growth of a new vocabulary".

This fact has been recognized in other oversea dictionaries, and in several cases⁶⁵ special supplements have been devoted to Australasianisms.

C. J. Dennis tossed in a vocabulary of alleged Australian expressions with his New York edition of "Doreen" and "The Sentimental Bloke"; Jice Doone⁶⁶ gave us a list of Australian slang in his "Timely Tips to New Australians", published in London in 1926; selections have also been given in the "Encycloaedia Britannica" since its 1929 edition; and Partridge gave us a list (probably the first authentic one, but not by any means complete) in his "Slang Today and Yesterday" with its elaborations appearing in his "Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English".⁶⁷

⁶⁴A typescript copy is in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, entitled "Material for a Dictionary of Australian Slang", by S. E. O'Brien and A. G. Stephens, 1900-10. Another copy with the note, "Materials for the Australzealand Slang Dictionary", is in the Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. This work contains some 650 entries, many of which have no further elaboration than "See Morris", but the great bulk of it represents a sincerer attempt to study the subject than any work up to that time.

⁶⁵Especially "A Modern Dictionary of the English Language" pub-

lished in 1912, by Macmillan and Co., London, more or less a brief repetition of Morris—I have also seen a 1916 edition of this dictionary with an Australasian supplement—and "The Modern Standard English Dictionary" (1939).

⁶⁶Nom-de-plume of Vance Marshall, author of "Jail from Within" (1918) and "World of the Living Dead" (1919).

⁶⁷1938. This work contains about 1000 Australasianisms—excluding flora and fauna—and, apart from my own "Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang", which gives about 3000 Australasian terms, is the most representative work of its kind.

These, with the exception of "Digger Dialects" (1919), by W. H. Downing—the first dictionary of war slang published after World War No. 1 and devoted almost exclusively to Diggerisms—and L. G. D. Acland's "Sheep-Station Glossary",⁶⁸ represent most of the important research done to date on our language.⁶⁹ But they do not by any means represent all that has been written about our language.

For instance, Nettie Palmer⁷⁰ devotes a chapter to Austral English in "Talking It Over" (1932). She writes:

While putting on record our gratitude to Professor Morris for his "Austral English", we can express at the same time our amazement that the book has had no successor. . . . The book is chiefly valuable in so far as it shows the origin and development of colloquialism, such racy phrases as give continuity and character to the English language used in Australia. Experimental writers like Katharine Prichard show how idiom and slang can be used to create an atmosphere. Colloquial words? Why should we resist or deprecate them if they are alive? Some colloquial words prove spurious and superfluous, others are vital. That is why we need a full book of our words, sifting the quick from the dead in our Austral English.

We can compare this statement with the declaration by F. A. Napier, in the "Sydney Morning Herald"⁷¹: "Nowadays . . . our slang words are things of the past, having been superseded by vulgar Americanisms." We also find contradictions in the view of the "Herald"⁷² that the use of slang "is increasingly characteristic . . . of educated Australians", and the declaration by Dr George Mackaness,⁷³ Australian historian, that the charge against Australians "of using slang and being nasal in their speech . . . is less justified now than it was a few years ago".

No, the accusation cannot be levelled that Australians have ignored their language. Rather the reverse. There has been a

⁶⁸ Published in "The Press", Christchurch, New Zealand, at weekly intervals, September-December 1933, with revisions and additions in January 1934.

⁶⁹ A brief and unimportant review of Australasian contributions to the English language was given by Professor J. Hight in his "Manual of Derivation and Composition of Words" (Whitcombe and Tombs, New Zealand), published circa 1906. "The Australian Comic Dictionary of Words and Phrases", by "Turner O. Lingo" (1913), contained a fair

sprinkling of Australianisms, but it was a flippant and jumbled effort, of no philological value. A vocabulary of about 850 terms (many not Australian) was published in Sydney "Truth"; 27 April 1924.

⁷⁰ Wife of the noted Australian author and critic, Vance Palmer.

⁷¹ 18 June 1932.

⁷² 27 July 1929: a leading article.

⁷³ In an address before the Henry Lawson Literary Society on 14 March 1932. The quotation is from the "Herald" report of the address.

spate of opinion, which, unfortunately, has been mixed and contradictory.⁷⁴

4.—WHAT WE HAVE SACRIFICED

It is clear that we could not have acquired an Australian language without losing something of the language of our English forefathers. We have already seen how *bush* displaced "forest" and "woods" and how other words also fell by the wayside. But this was only the beginning.

Here is part of the case put by the eminent Australian, Professor W. K. Hancock, in his "Australia":

[The Australian] has rejected almost at a blow the beautiful names of an intimate countryside—fields and meadows, woods, copse, spinney and thicket, dale, glen, vale and coomb, brook, stream and rivulet, inn and village. But in their place is a new vocabulary of the Bush—billabong, dingo, damper, bushwacker, billy, cooe, swag, swaggie, humpy, stockman, jackeroo, squatter, bushranger, sundowner, brumby, drover, never-never, outback, backblocks. One is "on the track", "on the wallaby". Many words have come from the aborigines, some have worked upwards from "St Giles' Greek", others (digger, fossick, pan-out) derive from the gold rushes, and others still are originals coined offhand out of experience and a matter-of-fact humour.

This type of loss was noted in New Zealand last century by W. Pember Reeves⁷⁵ when he lamented that New Zealanders no longer used such terms as brook, moor, heath, dale, copse, meadow and glade, and it has been reiterated in many forms since.⁷⁶

Jice Doone makes an interesting comment on the matter in the introduction to his "Timely Tips to New Australians":

A remarkable feature of the Australian's manner of expression . . . is the frequent evidences of his absolute rejection of accepted English words. For instance, such standard English words as fields, woods, meadow, inn, tavern, brook, hatchet, jacket and village find no place in the Australian vocabulary and their use to the Australian sounds foreign. Fields and meadows come under the heading of paddocks. A brook is known as a creek. Such a term as "in the woods" conveys no meaning, the woods,

⁷⁴ Compare, for instance, these two statements: (a) "The popular vocabulary of the antipodes . . . is both large and varied"—"All the Year Round", 30 July 1887. (b) "Too many Australians suffer from paucity of vocabulary"—W. Lennard in the "Sydney Morning Herald", 17 July 1931.

⁷⁵ "The Long White Cloud" (1898).

⁷⁶ Commenting on these losses in New Zealand in the "Review of Reviews", January 1901, the Rev. Joseph Barry said: "These changes . . . are not improvements. The schoolmasters would do well to bring back sweeter English words to their true use."

like a forest, being classified under the all-embracing heading of bush. Paraffin is known only as kerosene. A hooligan is known as a larrikin and the word corn is only ascribed to maize. A coat is never referred to as a jacket; the word scone is pronounced "skon" in place of "skoan"; hatchets are tomahawks; pails are known only as buckets.

Dr Thomas Wood, in "Cobbers" (1934) echoed the complaint: "The whole rich treasury of words from the [English] countryside and words from the dialects has been thrown away and has died. A heavy loss."

It cannot be regarded as extraordinary, therefore, that the sole example of the word "brook" in the "Census Bulletin of Commonwealth Localities" (1933) is Thompson's Brook, Western Australia; that, on the other hand, there are scores of "creeks". (Eighteen Sandy Creeks are listed; fourteen Spring Creeks; twelve Deep Creeks and a multitude of others.)

This tendency to reject English environmental terms was not an accident. It sprang quite logically from the fact that our outback was not, and never will be, "intimate". Our environmental concepts were different and the terms we developed to describe those concepts were a measure of the difference between England and Australia.

Not only have we tossed aside many words from the northern hemisphere, but we have also given new applications to many English terms. Our *borough*, for instance, differs from its standard English connotation of "a town possessing a municipal corporation and special privileges conferred by royal charter; a town which sends representatives to Parliament". In Australia the word is applied generally to "a district of not less than nine miles square, of which no part is more than six miles from any other part, and having a specified number of inhabitants as required by Statute".

Our *township* is not the same as the English *township*.⁷⁷ Our

⁷⁷ The "Oxford Dictionary" defines the Australian use as: "A site laid out prospectively for a town, meanwhile often consisting of a few shanties grouped around a railway station, store, hotel, post office, or the like; a village or hamlet." Though wide, this definition is scarcely satisfying; the "Modern Standard English Dictionary" (1939) does better with the simple meaning "any collection of residences". In a

country of nearly 3,000,000 square miles, where only 30 centres have a population of more than 10,000—and half of them are under 20,000—the percentage of small settlements is enormous. The 1933 census revealed more than 14,500 localities where 20 or more people live, and most of these, in the loose Australian use of the term, could be termed townships. The following distinctions are made on a map of Aus-

use of *bishop's court* differs from the English; in Australia (as was first noted by Lentzner in 1891) we use it for a bishop's palace, but in standard English it is an "ecclesiastical court held in the cathedral of a diocese".

It was with reason, therefore, that I. L. Bird, in her "Australia Felix: Impressions of Victoria" (1877), pointed out that anyone coming to Australia would require "to learn something of a new vocabulary and in some cases unlearn the familiar meaning of words or limit it locally".

Ours is not an isolated instance where this rejection and modification of old terms has taken place; it was the same in America and New Zealand and South Africa. If it is axiomatic that all language tends to become universal in relation to its publicizing agents, it is equally axiomatic that any language can remain alive only in so far as environment sustains it. Environment is something more than hills and trees and plainlands; it is the people and the things that fill their lives, because people put down their roots and merge with their conditions of life just as a tree does.

If the Australian language is something to be reckoned with it is because the boundary riders, larrikins, sundowners, fizgigs, diggers, and other dinkum Aussies who evolved it are something to be reckoned with also.

tralia issued by the Government Printer, Canberra, 1938: Capital cities; *towns*, ranging in population from "above 20,000" to "below 1000"; and "*townships*, minor settle-

ments, homesteads, etc." which leaves the term undefined, but reduces it to the level of being much "below 1000".

PART II

CHAPTER II

BEGINNINGS

1.—CONVICTS

LIFE ran thinly in the new world of the south in the years between 1788¹ and the end of the eighteenth century. A few thousand people had been thrown together on the edge of a vast wilderness, before them the Pacific, behind them the grey, bleak unknown. They had scratched a toehold for themselves in a new land, and it was not much more than a toehold—a few huts, barracks for the convicts, the beginnings of cultivation, little else except the forbidding bush that pressed around them and made their attempt at settlement seem no larger than a grain of sand on the rim of a plate. Yet out of that small fragment of a colony emerged the first glimpses of a new language.

It is important in studying this remote part of our history to look not only at the physical environment, but at the people themselves, for these were no ordinary colonists. They did not come with good intentions and high hopes. They were pitchforked into a new life and for them there was to be no going back.

The majority of the convicts represented the worst types that the English prison system could throw together; if they were not brutal and animal-like by nature, the system made them so. It was impossible for refinement in any form to survive.

We should also remember that the original white inhabitants of New Zealand were little better than those of Australia. The lowest dregs of the seven seas had headed south on whaling and sealing expeditions. 'These men' helped to spread throughout the Pacific the imbecile baby talk known as pidgin English. If there was anything to choose between them and the convicts

¹ The First Fleet arrived in 1788, the colony being formally proclaimed on 7 February.

at Sydney Cove it could have been mainly that the former were free and the latter were in chains.

Our interest is not concerned so much with the nature of these "pioneers" as with the language they spoke. They were proficient in the use of prison cant and vulgarism, the former because it was the *lingua franca* of their type, the latter because it was the natural concomitant of raw living and brutal discipline. No other class of society would use slang more readily or adapt it more expertly to their new environment; no other class would have a better flair for concocting new terms to fit in with their new conditions of life. And their influence was bound to be wide.

Cunningham in his "Two Years in New South Wales", gives us a glimpse of the picture as he saw it in 1826:

All the natives round Sydney understand English well and speak it, too, so as to be understood by residents. The Billingsgate slang they certainly have acquired in perfection, and no white would think of competing with them in abuse or hard swearing, a constant torrent of which flows from their mouths as long as their antagonist remains before them.²

A number of slang phrases current in St Giles' Greek bid fair to become legitimized in the dictionary of this colony: *plant*, *swag*, *pulling up* and other epithets of the Tom and Jerry school are established—the dross passing here as genuine, even among all ranks. In our police offices, the slang words are taken regularly down in examinations and I once saw a little urchin not exceeding ten years *patter* it in evidence to the Bench with perfect fluency. Among the lower classes these terms form a part of every common conversation, and the children consequently catch them.³

The "proverbial cant" of the convicts, of which J. O. Tucker makes mention in his "Australian Story"⁴ was certain to influence the subsequent story of the Australian language. Through the literature of the times, or what passed for literature—books,

² An earlier comment on the facility with which aboriginals picked up vulgar speech was made by Samuel Kittle, "Concise History of the Colony and Natives of New South Wales" (Edinburgh: circa 1815). He wrote: "They are . . . great proficient in the language and Newgate slang of the convicts; and in case of any quarrel are by no means unequal to them in the exchange of abuse."

³ The similarity of this quotation with the following from W. Shaw's book, "The Land of Promise" (1854),

should be noted: "The expressions *lifting*, *swag*, *planting*, etc., from frequent application, seem likely to become legitimate figures of speech . . . This thieves' slang children, of course, readily adopt and use them as household words." Shaw adds that "even ladies sometimes inadvertently let slip barbarisms" in Australia.

⁴ Published in 1865. A. Russell, "A Tour Through the Australian Colonies (1840) provides the note: "Slang terms and a little bouncing are the order of the day with the convicts."

pamphlets, journals and newspapers—we are able to reconstruct part of the picture at least.

In collecting material for his novel, "For the Term of His Natural Life",⁵ Marcus Clarke was at pains to recreate the atmosphere of the time. Much of his story represents the adaptation of material from reports on convict life in both Van Diemen's Land and Norfolk Island. Accordingly, we find Clarke referring to "the horrible slang of the prison ship" on which his hero, Rufus Dawes, was transported, and later to the "hideous jargon of the chain gangs". Speaking of Norfolk Island convicts in 1846, he alludes also to "language . . . such as was never before heard out of Bedlam".

A point that visitors to Australia note is that a criminal or a jail-bird is rarely referred to as a *convict* by Australians. For us the word *convict* has acquired a specified historical meaning. This avoidance of its use is not new. If we are to believe early writers, the Australian public has always been sensitive about the word.⁶ In 1826 Cunningham spoke of "the term *convict* being erased by a sort of general tacit compact from our Botany dictionary as a word too ticklish to be pronounced in these sensitive latitudes". Still later, William Shaw tells us in "The Land of Promise": "The asperity of the word *convict* shocks their ears, so the more mollifying term of *Government man* has been substituted." Comments on the same subject are given by F. Fowler, "Southern Lights and Shadows" (1859) who says that the word *convict* "is always spoken sotto voce"; and by A Clergyman ("Australia in 1866") who declares: "There is no word in the English language of which one requires to make a more studied use in Australia than *convict*."

It was probably for this reason that a large number of synonyms for *convict* became current, among them *canary*,⁷ *transport*, *old hand*,⁸ *crossbred*, *legitimate* (i.e. a person with

⁵ Originally published in Melbourne in 1874 under the title, "His Natural Life".

⁶ A total of 160,663 convicts was transported to Australia: to N.S.W., 83,290; to Tasmania, 67,655; to W.A., 9718. Transportation ceased at the following dates: to N.S.W. in 1841; to Tasmania in 1852; to W.A. in 1867.

⁷ Both *canary* and *canary bird* were in old English slang for a jail-bird, but the application to a

transported convict was peculiarly Australian.

⁸ Although *lag*, a convict under sentence of transportation, was originally in English cant, the use of *old lag* seems to have been an Australian development to describe an ex-convict or ticket-of-leave man. However, W. W. Dobie, "Recollections of a Visit to Port Phillip" (1856), refers to convicts (not, be it noted, *ex-convicts*) "known in the colony by the aristocratic cognomen

a legitimate or legal reason for coming to Australia), *demon* (a Van Diemen's Land convict), *cockatoo*, *Cockatoo hand*, *Cockatoo bird*, *Cockatoo islander* (for a Sydney convict)⁹, *Derwent duck* (a Hobart convict)¹⁰—terms which, in subsequent years, were to be edged out of use by euphemisms such as *exiles*, *absentees*, *empire builders*, *patriots* and *pioneers*, for the sensitivity of the convicts was nothing compared with the sensitivity of their descendants who were to find in an expression such as *First Families* something of an implied sneer.

Our early history is strewn with examples of contests between the socially eligible and the socially ineligible—of *ticket-of-leavers*, *expirees* and *emancipists* who struggled to gain a niche in the small Australian world of their day, and the bitter opposition they encountered from the *exclusionists* or *exclusives*,¹¹ as the free settlers and officialdom were known. These exclusionists fought hard to prevent ex-convicts achieving full civic rights after they had completed their sentences.

From the outset, considerable stress was laid on the gulf separating those who *came out* and those who were *sent out under hatches* and, as early comments on Australia show, the word *free* acquired an exaggerated importance. In 1809 we find some Hawkesbury settlers, who sent an address to Governor Bligh, emphasizing that they *came free into the colony*. These were the type of people who styled themselves the *aristocracy*, *sterling* (as opposed to *currency* which was applied to convicts and Australian-born whites) and *pure merinos* and, since they had no "legal" reasons for coming to Australia, who also bore the title *illegitimates*. Cunningham uses all these terms in his "Two Years in New South Wales" and so does James Mudie in his "Felonry of New South Wales" (1837).

Although it is almost forgotten today, the term *currency* bulked largely in the early years of last century. Joshua Lake gives us the following note about it in his "Webster's Dictionary" supplement of 1898:

of *Old Legs*". He uses this version *old legs* several times, possibly because he confused the terms *lag* and *old hand*.

⁹ Cockatoo Island, Sydney, was first established as a place for convicts in February 1839, and was constituted the penal establishment of N.S.W. in 1841.

¹⁰ *Ex* the Derwent River. The *Sydney ducks* who came into prominence half a century later, were Australians who swarmed to California in the 1849 gold rush.

¹¹ Also called *emigrants*, "a very misleading name" as the "Australian Encyclopaedia", vol. i, p. 406, observes.

In the early days a great variety of specie was in circulation, English silver, American and Spanish dollars, johannes, ducats, mohurs, pagodas, rupees, guilders, as well as paper money of different kinds and notes of hand issued by established tradesmen. Such notes and other paper were called *currency notes* and the various coins were called collectively *currency*. English gold pieces were called *sterling*, as opposed to the mixed colonial *currency*. Figuratively, the two words were applied to immigrants and the native-born respectively.

Cunningham gives some varied uses of the term, including *currency lad*, *currency lass*, *currency belles*, *currency females*, *currency criminals*, *currency sprouts*, *currency urchins* and *currency youths*. In 1852 we find G. C. Mundy ("Our Antipodes") using *un-currency* as the equivalent of "un-Australian".

If the way of the convicts was hard, it did not prevent their development of certain social groupings. Terms like *legitimate exquisites*, *felon swells* and *gentlemen convicts* may sound strange to our ears over the interval of a century or more, but they represented something tangible to the convicts—some small thing that was all they had left of worldly pretences. A. L. Haydon, in his "Trooper Police of Australia" (1911), notes that under a loose system of classification in the early days convicts were divided into "town thieves, rural labourers and gentlemen". T. H. Braim tells us in his "History of New South Wales" (1845) that these *gentlemen convicts* were "considered the prizes in the assignment scheme" because of their education.

The story of convict slang began almost as soon as the *First Fleet*¹² dropped its anchors off Sydney Cove. The Sydney settlement became known almost immediately as *the Camp*¹³; later the term was transferred to the Hobart convict settlement. In subsequent years the Hobart Town Penitentiary became known as *the Tench*. In Western Australia the prison at Fremantle was *the establishment*, a term which is fit to rank with *the System*—as transportation in general and the maltreatment of prisoners in particular became known—as notable examples of understatement. There was not much understatement, however, about *the Ocean Hell*, the well-merited title given to the Norfolk Island convict settlement whither the worst offenders were sent. Nor

¹² Although there is no record of the term *First Fleet* in the dictionaries of Morris, Webster (1898) and Lentzner, *Second Fleet*, for the contingent of convicts that arrived in 1790, is found in literary use in 1845 and *first fleeter*, a convict who

arrived in 1788, is found in 1848. These expressions were doubtless used long before.

¹³ J. West, "History of Tasmania", vol. ii (1852), says the convicts "gave and long preserved to the site of the city (Sydney) the name of Camp".

did the convicts err on the side of politeness when they tacked the name *Pinchgut* on to the little island in Sydney Harbour officially known as Fort Denison.

Perhaps the first authentic example of convict slang in Australia was the use of *scrubbing brushes* for bread containing more chaff and bran than flour—noted by D. Collins in his "Account of N.S.W." (1802). It is not recorded in oversea slang dictionaries. Nor is *red shirt* for a back scarified by flogging. Nor, though they are formed on English slang terms for coins,¹⁴ are *tester*, a flogging of twenty-five lashes (also known as a *Botany Bay dozen*); *bob*, fifty lashes; *bull*, seventy-five lashes; and *canary*, one hundred lashes. Nor are *old fake*, a convict on his second probation; *logs*, a prison (Collins refers to "log prisons" at Sydney and Parramatta); *a clean potato*, a free man; *wheelbarrow*, a bullock waggon taking supplies to men in an *iron gang*; and *domino*, the last lash in a flogging.

This type of material helps us to see the times more clearly. If our authors are to write about Australia's early days, it is essential that they learn something of the language of the times. It is not sufficient merely to drag in expressions like *assignment system*, *assigned servants*, *assignees*, *free-grant system*, *ticket-of-leave man* (this was subsequently shortened to *leaver*), *the Factory* (defined as the "house of correction for females"), and *felonry*, on the ground that Australia was the first country to give these words currency and meaning. Some closer approach must be made to the individuals and to Australian life as it affected them.

If freed convicts were called *Botany Bay swells* as we are told in "Fell Tyrant" (1836), and black eyes were known as *a Botany Bay coat of arms* or *colonial livery*, we glimpse through these expressions—minor though they undoubtedly are—some part of the picture that was our early Australia.

So with *old dogs*, "as the experienced convicts are called", according to Marcus Clarke; the *Norfolk Dumpling*, "that's what we call sending 'em to Norfolk Island, the most out-and-out cruel punishment that they can give"¹⁵; *Little Go Court*, the Commissioners' Court of Requests; *Pittites*,¹⁶ a name given by

¹⁴ *Tester*, sixpence; *bob*, a shilling; *bull*, crown piece; *canary*, a guinea. This flogging slang was recorded by J. Lang, "Botany Bay" (1859).

¹⁵ J.W., "Perils, Pleasures and Pastimes" (1849). The term is prob-

ably derived from a much earlier English use for an inhabitant of Norfolk, England, in this case being associated with dumpling (the food).

¹⁶ Ernestine Hill, "My Love Must Wait" (1941), refers twice to mutation-birds as *Mr Pitt birds*.

convicts to mutton-birds on Mount Pitt, Norfolk Island; and *to oval*, "a term in use among the convicts which means to bend the round ring of the ankle fetter so that the heel can be drawn through it".

No review of Norfolk Island convict cant could omit reference to *the Ring*. According to R. P. Stewart, "A Report on Norfolk Island" (1846), this *Ring* was a part of the island where the worst criminals collected. These convicts terrorized their more timid fellows, exacting tribute from them. Marcus Clarke describes *the Ring* as "some forty of the oldest and worst prisoners" on the island. The term is of particular interest, since it preceded the U.S. underworld use of *ring* for a criminal clique (a sense which emerged about 1872). Although it is uncertain whether there is any direct connection between the organizations, D. Collins refers in his "Account of N.S.W."¹⁷ to "The Fraternal Society of Norfolk Island", an anti-government body which the convicts formed among themselves. From this *the Ring* may have developed.

Norfolk convicts also gave us *slant*, a deliberate offence committed by a convict in order to obtain a trial in Hobart or Sydney. It may have come from the dialectal *slant*, a lie, and probably influenced our modern use of *slinter* and *slanter*, a trick or ruse.

Another term we may have inherited from the convicts is our use of *cockatoo* for a person who stands guard as lookout. We also call him a *nitkeeper* and say he is *on the blink*. Cunningham records that it was "a common trick [of certain gangs] to station a sentinel on a commanding eminence to give the alarm, while all the others divert themselves or go to sleep. Such are known here by the name of *cockatoo gangs* from following the example of that wary bird." English cant has the use of *crow* for a sentinel who keeps guard during a robbery.

Worthy of note also were *bolter* for a runaway convict or an absconding assigned servant; *Government stroke*, defined as "a lazy method of working" adopted by the convicts, which has now become a well-accredited term in Australia, especially when applied to Civil Servants; and *crawler* which first came into use as a pejorative in convict days, considerably before it was used in English slang for a sycophant or toady.

In "The Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh", 1825-44¹⁸ we are

¹⁷ An entry under the date July 1798.

¹⁸ Published by Jonathan Cape, London, 1929.

told that a *crawler* was a convict who escaped from his gang in collusion with the overseer and, after a period of freedom, allowed himself to be recaptured by the overseer, so that, in exchange for his brief liberty the latter would receive a reward. Rashleigh also uses the expression to describe a malingering convict.¹⁹

There is a single term which has been used to summarize all Australia's convict beginnings—*birthstains*. It was first impressed on public consciousness in 1899 by the youthful Earl Beauchamp who had been appointed Governor of New South Wales:

Your birthstains have you turned to good,
Forcing strong wills perverse to steadfastness,
The first flush of the tropics in your blood,
And at your feet success. . . .

No review of the period would be complete without an allusion to those scurrilous papers, lampooning high officials and other prominent figures in the early settlement, known as *pipes*. These papers (of which the Mitchell Library, Sydney, has a collection of manuscript and printed copies) were left in places where they would fall into public hands as well as into the hands of those they criticized. It was symptomatic of the times that the first *pipe* was circulated in 1803 against Governor King whose efforts to prevent the sale of rum had met with general hostility. Those were days when liquor was dear to almost every man's heart—riproaring brutal days when the only escape from the monotony and crudity of colonial life lay in a few simple directions of which alcohol was the most attractive. "The whole study of both sexes is drinking, gambling and whoring," declared a writer in 1836.

Here is a quotation from the "Australian Encyclopaedia" to clarify the picture:

¹⁹ Subsequent Australian uses of the term have been varied. Briefly they are: (a) A term of contempt for a person: 1847, A. Harris, "Settlers and Convicts". (b) A shepherd (many of these were ex-convicts): 1852, "Emigrant in Australia". The writer adds that the term was "one of the most opprobrious in the colonial vocabulary". (c) A sheep: 1847, J. Sidney, "A Voice from the Far Interior". (d) Slow cattle or

cows of peaceable habits: 1853, "Letters from Victoria Pioneers". (e) Slow or timid horses: 1863, E. M. Curr, "Pure Saddle Horses". (f) A lazy cattle dog or sheep dog: 1 April 1899, "The Bulletin". (g) A sheep farmer or squatter: 1896, H. Lawson, "While the Billy Boils". In his "Voyage of the Beagle", Charles Darwin gives the definition: "A *crawler* is an assigned convict who runs away and lives how he can, by labour and by petty theft."

. . . traffic in rum was the cause of most of the evils which afflicted the colony of New South Wales from the departure of Governor Phillip till 1816, when it was ended by an order forbidding government officials to engage in commercial transactions. In the early days spirits of all kinds were loosely spoken of as *rum*. The scarcity of coins compelled the use of a popular and easily divisible medium; wages and government rewards were paid in spirits; a man sold his wife for four gallons of rum; part of the price for the erection of the first church was paid in rum; and the first theatre accepted payments in rum or kind.

Strong drink gave Australia such notable expressions as *rum currency* and *the Rum Rebellion* (also called *the Rum Puncheon Rebellion*).

2.—BUSHRANGERS AND DUFFERS

Although much of his history relates to post-convict days, the *bushranger* and his profession grew out of our formative period and his story is best told here. To those who see bushrangers as a succession of Ned Kellys wearing sinister-looking cast-iron helmets, it will be well to add a reminder that our original bushrangers did not choose their way of life because they were lured by adventure. It was forced on them by circumstance. They were convicts who had escaped from their prisons or gangs. The sole avenue of freedom open to them was the inhospitable Australian bush in which only an aboriginal could maintain life. Robbery from outlying settlements and homesteads was a natural result. That they added murder, rape and arson to their catalogue of crimes was almost inevitable once they had become outlaws.

The first use in print of the word *bushranger* occurs in the Sydney "Gazette" of 17 February 1805, but the term had been adumbrated in a letter by George Suttor to Sir Joseph Banks²⁰ in which he remarked: "Surely it cannot be said that the country is in safety while the most abandoned [convicts] have permission to *range* the country at large."

The Tasmanian bandit, Mike Howe, who was killed in October 1818, styled himself "Governor of the *Rangers*".

From its use to describe a renegade convict, *bushranger* soon acquired the specified meaning by which it is known today, although modern usage has renovated it. We now apply it

²⁰ Dated 10 March 1804, in Bladen's "Historical Records of New South Wales".

opprobriously to a person who takes advantage of others or robs them cold-bloodedly.²¹

The use of the verbal noun *bushranging* has also been modified by time. In her novel "Foveaux" (1939) Kylie Tennant gives us an effective taste of Australian idiom when she refers to one her characters who had "a mild and lucrative form of *bushranging* as owner of a garage".

Although the most colourful days in bushranging history were those which followed the discovery of gold in 1851, numerous terms connected with highway robbery came into use considerably earlier. *Bail up*, meaning to hold up and rob a traveller or party of travellers on the road, was current in the early 1840s, and by 1850 had acquired extended colloquial uses. In "Melbourne as I Saw It"²² we find a person being *bailed up* by thieves and prostitutes in the city streets, and in Henry Kingsley's "Geoffrey Hamlyn" (1859) a classical allusion is made to Thermopylae where the Greeks "got *bailed up* among the rocks".²³

There has been some dispute, notably by the "Oxford Dictionary", as to whether the bushranging use of *bail up* is connected in any way with its application to the *bailing up* of cows. "Webster's Dictionary" of 1898 notes, however: "In some English dialects *bail up!* in the sense of *stand still!* is used as a command to cows at milking time. It was adopted by Australian bushrangers as a command to travellers whom they wished to detain on the highway for the purpose of robbing them. . . . From this use the more general senses are easily derived."

An interesting comment on the term appears in Boldrewood's "Robbery Under Arms"²⁴ when a character says in Chapter xlviii:

The same talk for cows and Christians! That's how things get stuck into the talk in a new country. Some old hand like father, as had spent all his mornings in the cowyard, had taken to the bush and tried his hand at sticking up people. When they came near enough, of course, he'd pop out from behind a tree or a rock with his old musket or a pair of pistols, and when he wanted them to stop, "Bail up, d— yer!" would come a deal

²¹ In "New Zealand Slang" (1940), I pointed out that *beachcomber* was recorded in N.Z. in 1844, but that there had been a still earlier form of the word, *beach ranger* (1827), which was almost certainly formed on the Australian use of *bushranger*.

²² By A Minister, circa 1850.

²³ J. C. Hotten's "Slang Dictionary", 1873 edition, listed as Australian the use of *bale up*, "equivalent to our 'shell out'. A demand for instantaneous payment".

²⁴ First published as a serial in the Sydney "Mail" in 1881; issued in book form in 1888.

quicker and more natural-like to his tongue than "Stand!" So "Bail up!" it was from that day to this and there'll have to be a deal of change in the ways of the colonies and them as come from 'em before anything else takes its place between the man that's got the arms and the man that's got the money.

This quotation introduces us to *sticking up*, which was derived from an earlier verbal use of *stick up*, to hold up and rob a person, also current in the early 1840s, and first brought into popular use by bushrangers.

In many ways Boldrewood's "Robbery Under Arms" serves as our first handbook of bushranging. It is something more, too. It uses our idiom. We have no feeling that the characters are exiled Englishmen pining for the northern hemisphere. H. M. Green, in "An Outline of Australian Literature" (1930), describes the hero, Dick Marston, as "perhaps the first thoroughly Australian character in fiction". In the adaptation of the Australian scene for the purposes of fiction and in the use of Australian expressions, Boldrewood set the cornerstone of what has since become an indigenous literature.

Here are some of the bushranging and stock-stealing terms he employs: *bush telegraphs*, confederates of bushrangers who warned them of police movements; *traps*, mounted police; *stuck up*, held up and robbed; *to take to the bush* and *to turn out*, to become a bushranger; *cattle duffing* and *horse duffing*, the stealing of cattle and horses; *clearskin*, an unbranded animal; *cross beasts*, stolen stock; *duffing yard*, a corral in the bush where stolen stock were yarded and their brands altered; *dart*, a plan, scheme or dodge; *cattle duffer*, a cattle thief; a *plant*,²⁵ a place where stolen stock is hidden, and *to spring a plant*, to reveal the hiding place of stolen stock; *derry*,²⁶ the hue and cry

²⁵ *To plant*, to conceal, hide, was in old English cant. Both it and *spring a plant* were listed by Vaux. In 1845 ("Chambers' Miscellany", Part I) a writer alludes to *planting* as "the colonial expression", and it is safe to say that—as the result of stock-stealing activities in Australia—all these terms are more used in this country than elsewhere. W. Kelly, "Life in Victoria" (1859), notes: "*Planting* is a branch of colonial horse-traffic, which consists in first stealing a horse, and, as soon as the reward for his recov-

ery is offered, planting or placing him in a place where the thief pretends to have found him."

²⁶ Boldrewood uses the term in the following contexts: "when the derry was off", "till the derry's off", and "when all the derry was over". The term possibly comes from English dialect *deraye*, confusion, noise, through its link with hue and cry. Subsequently *derry* became synonymous with "a down on or dislike for a person" (it is used in that sense in the "Bulletin", 1902) and its earlier connotation was lost.

of police pursuit; *cattle racket*,²⁷ the public outcry raised as the result of the large-scale stealing of stock; and *logs*, a jail.²⁸

One important old term which Boldrewood does not use in "Robbery Under Arms" is *gully-raker*, a cattle thief, especially a thief who combs wild country and steals unbranded stock. It was current before 1847. In his English "Slang Dictionary" of 1873, Hotten gives it the following definition: "Cattle thieves in Australia, the cattle being stolen out of almost inaccessible valleys, there termed gulleys." The expression has also had wide use for a stockwhip; in 1848 one writer on Australia gives *gully-raking* for the wielding of a stockwhip.

Other terms employed by stock-stealers during various phases of Australian history have been: *fryingpan brand*, a large brand used by cattle thieves to cover the rightful owner's brand (1857); *dunneker*, a cattle thief (from English cant, *dunnock*, a cow); *nuggeting* and *poddy dodging*, the stealing of unbranded calves²⁹; *scrub-running*, the combing of wild country for stock to steal; and *to pluck a brand*, to fake a new brand on stolen cattle or horses by pulling out the hairs round the existing brand.

It was to describe the altering of stock-brands that the old English slang word *duff*, to fake old clothes as new, was introduced into Australia. Its wide use in this country has served to change the meaning considerably, so that when we speak of a *cattle-duffer* today we generally mean a cattle-thief, rather than a person who merely fakes brands. In the "Bulletin" of 13 August 1892, we find the English-sounding expression *duffing-ken*, a yard in which cleanskin cattle are herded. This is a combination of *duffing* with the old English cant *ken*, a house or place. There are many uses of *-ken* in English compounds and this appears to be the only one—it probably never had much currency in Australia—that could be described as indigenous.

²⁷ A. Harris, "Settlers and Convicts" (1847), defines the expression as "the agitation of society which took place when some wholesale system of plunder in cattle was brought to light". The same author in "The Emigrant Family" (1849) notes that the origin was "generally the discovery of some wholesale aggression on cattle . . . [and] as an immediate consequence a universal

suspicion of all parties who seem to have acquired large herds, or the reputation of possessing large herds, in a short period".

²⁸ The convict use was noted earlier.

²⁹ E. Partridge, "Slang Dictionary", lists as Australian, *to dodge Pompey*, "to steal grass". He declares that Pompey signifies the Law.

To conclude this brief review of outback crime the following synonyms for bushrangers might be noted: *rangers* (1859)³⁰, *white Indians* (1878)³¹ and *stickers-up* (1879). *Demon* was formerly used for an old hand at the game.

³⁰ As mentioned earlier the Tasmanian bandit, Mike Howe, described himself as "Governor of the Rangers".

³¹ This appears to be a Boldrewood invention. He uses it in his

"Ups and Downs" (1878). He also describes tracks left by aboriginals as *Indian sign*. It may be noted that our earliest records of Australia and New Zealand contain references to the natives as *Indians*.

CHAPTER III

THE SOIL

1.—SQUATTING: OLD AND NEW

IN the long and complicated story of the Australian soil and of the people who have tamed it, few words bulk more significantly than *stock*. Practically the first indigenous term supplied by Australia to the English language was the derivative *stockyard*, which was in use before 1796.

As the horizons of Australian life were pushed inland, a crop of allied expressions sprang into being, each of them falling into the niche where necessity thrust it¹: *stock-keeper* (1800), *stockman* (1803), *stockfarm* (1806), *stockhouse* (1808), *stockholder* (1819), *stockrun* (1825), *stockhut* (1826), *stockstation* (1833), *stockwhip* (1845), *stockhorse* (1847), *stockbook* (1847), *stockfarming* (1849), *stockrider* (1859), *to stock up* (1878), *stockroute* (1886), *stocksick*, used of land upon which animals have been pastured too long (1890), *to stock-keep* (1890), *stockagent* (1897), and *stockist*, a grazier, which has come into use in the past few decades.

As used collectively for farm animals the word *stock* dates from the sixteenth century. Until about 1850 it retained this application in its Australian derivatives. Since 1850, however, there has been an increasing tendency for it to become synonymous with cattle. Thus a *stockman* is a cattle man; *stockrider*, one who looks after cattle; *stockwhip*, a whip used in driving bullocks or yarding cattle; *stockyard*, a place where cattle are yarded as distinct from *sheep-yards* or *sheep-pens*.

Stock-keeper is not only a person who looks after stock, but also the name given to the loop on a stockwhip which unites the thong with the handle. The use of *stock* for the handle of a whip dates from the seventeenth century.

¹ The dates given are those of the first printed quotations I have found for the terms.

Although *squatter* arrived in this country via America, it is another term to which Australia has given a strongly individual meaning. It is doubtful whether it ever had the strict U.S. sense in this country. In America its sole use was for a settler having no legal right to the land he occupied. In Australia our original *squatters* not only took possession of land to which they had no title, but specialized in raiding the properties of respectable neighbours. Charles Darwin, in his "Voyage of the Beagle", gives the definition:

A squatter is a freed or ticket-of-leave man, who builds a hut with bark on unoccupied ground, buys or steals a few animals, sells spirits without a licence, receives stolen goods—and so at last becomes rich and turns farmer; he is the horror of all his honest neighbours.

We can measure the disapproval with which the squatter was once regarded by the fact that until well into the 1840s the term was accepted as one of deep disrespect.²

In 1840, for instance, the Governor of New South Wales (Sir George Gipps) is found protesting that *squatter* is "hardly a proper word" by which to describe the occupier of 10,000 acres.

The definition given by T. H. Braim in his "History of New South Wales" (1846) lends colour to the story. Squatters, he said, were "ticket-of-leave holders or freed men who erected a hut on waste land . . . or on the outskirts of an estate . . . and immediately became a nuisance to the district".

Perhaps the most forceful description of all is given in a pamphlet issued by the South Australia Company about 1839 in which reference is made to "the mere squatter . . . content to lead a savage life in the wilds, remote from the decencies of society, with no company but his felon dependents".

Even in 1851 J. F. L. Foster ("New Colony of Victoria") is calling the word "a barbarous appellation" and in 1852 S. Mossman ("Gold Regions of Australia") declares that, "Stockholders, *erroneously named squatters*, are in this district [i.e. Queensland] a very superior class of men and are considered the aristocracy of the colony."

Some substantial changes have been wrought in the use of the word since those days. In 1903, Tom Collins wrote in "Such is Life": "We use the term squatter indifferently to denote a

²S. H. Roberts, "The Squatting Age in Australia" (1935), writes of certain bushrangers: "These gangs . . . were called *squatters* and their

holdings *runs*, even in the mid-twenties. . . . In the middle thirties the term was universally used as one of opprobrium."

ation owner, a managing partner or a salaried manager." Today, its use for a large landowner is well established.

There have been numerous derivatives, some ephemeral, others enduring. In common Australian use have been *squatterom*, descriptive of the squatter class in general; *squattocracy* (dating from 1846)³ and *squatterarchy*. The verbal noun *squatting*, pertaining originally to the activities of a squatter in the derogatory sense of that word, dates from 1826, and *squattage*, the holding occupied by a squatter, from 1852.

Kindred of the squatter have been many. In 1836, the author of "The Fell Tyrant" split up the Australian farming community into four classes, the *swell settler*, the *dungaree settler*, the *souge settler* and, poorest of all, the *stringybark settler*. These terms have been forgotten long ago. Not so *cocky*, which we apply to farmers and landowners of all classes today; for example, *cow cocky*, *cherry cocky*, *fruit cocky*, *cane cocky*, *scrub cocky*, depending on their type of production and where they operate.

This word *cocky* originated in an old use of *cockatoo* and *cockatooer* for a small farmer who, according to legend, was 'just picking up the grains of a livelihood like cockatoos do maize'. *Cockatoo*⁴ came into use about 1850 and remained current until the end of the century when *cocky*, which had made its appearance in 1884, took over the running. The form *cockatoo* is not dead yet, however. As recently as 1941 Oliver Duff used it in his "New Zealand Now".

Related terms which are encountered frequently in Australian writings at the latter end of last century are *cockatoo settler* (1869), *cockatoo farmer* and *cockatoo squatter* (1873) and *cockatoo selector* (1893). A. J. Vogan in "Black Police" (1890) even introduces us to *Mrs Cockatoo* and *Mrs Cockatoo Squatter*. The verbal noun *cockatooing* also occurs frequently in old commentaries on our rural life.

Cockatoo's weather,⁵ i.e. "fine by day and rain by night, or sometimes fine all the week and wet on Sunday", and *cockatoo fence*, for a boundary fence of a small farm, can also be noted. A writer in the "Bulletin" of 3 September 1903 says that he heard *cockatoo fence* in Australian use in 1858 and adds: "The cockatoo fence came first, then the cockatoo—named after his

³ I. L. Bird, "Australia Felix" (1877) alludes to the *squatter aristocracy* which is possibly the origin of this portmanteau word.

⁴ Tradition says that an alternative form was *ground parrot*, also used for a small farmer.

⁵ Listed by Acland in his "Sheep Station Glossary".

fence." This theory may be correct, but evidence is to the contrary.

Derivatives of *cocky* include: *cockydom*, small farmers collectively (1906); *cockying*, farming (1907); *cocky's clip*, "in rural slang a cocky's clip is given to a sheep when practically every vestige of wool is removed by a shearer"; *cocky's coal*, corncocks used as fuel for a fire; *cocky's crow*, dawn or before dawn (a play on "cock crow"); *cocky's joy*, treacle; *cocky's string*, fencing wire; and *boss cocky*, which is used more often for a leader or organizer than for a farmer.

In the years between 1840 and 1870 when many emancipists were permitted to take up land, *gentleman settler* throve as a synonym for all that was refined in rural pioneering. Needless to say it died, as had *moleskin squatter*, for a working man who had come to own a small sheep run, and *free selector*. *To free select* and kindred terms were in wide use after 1870 when a great deal of land was being opened up, but they were clumsy expressions and the "free" was soon dropped. The title of A. H. Davis's well-known work "On Our Selection" (1899) is a case in point.

This opening up of land brought in its train a peculiar vocabulary of terms practically all of which are now obsolete. Most of them arose from the activities of big landowners. As we have seen earlier, our original squatters were by no means scrupulous; their traditions of chicanery and barefaced robbery were carried on ably by their descendants who introduced practices known as *gridironing*, *peacocking*, *land dummying* and *dummyism*.

The *gridironer* earned his name because he bought good farming land in strips—after the fashion of a gridiron—so that intervening land was rendered worthless and might be bought at the gridironer's pleasure.⁶ The *peacocker* was a man of the same breed: he selected the best portions of a district and left the worthless sections for people with smaller means. The practice was known as *eye-picking*; thus we often find in old books references to farmers *picking the eyes out of the country*.

In the Ararat (Victoria) "Advertiser" of 13 June 1865, for

⁶ In their typescript notes (Mitchell Library, Sydney), Stephens and O'Brien note the Australian use of *gridiron railways*: "Those built by private capitalists under a land

grant concession; they work on the gridiron principle in taking up their grants so as to gain additional advantage."

instance, it is reported that "sections were taken up and the 'eye picked from the area'."

These expressions are apparently derived from a punning reference to the ocelliform markings on a peacock's tail.

Spotting was another synonym for *peacocking*, and the same idea was behind it—that of selfishly seizing the best parts of a district.⁷ The word *eye* itself became the epitome of all that was choice in land. In the "Australasian" of 23 June 1865 we find reference to "The great prizes—the allotments which were the eyes of the runs."

In their land-hungry depredations, the big squatters dodged the law by fair means or foul. To which end the *medium* or *dummy* came into existence. Under the law a buyer of land at Crown land auctions was required to attend in person and to swear that he was selecting land for his own use and benefit. It was here that the *dummy* stepped in, took up—under his own name—land for the unscrupulous person who was paying him, committed perjury, and edged the small landowner out. In the Ararat "Advertiser" we find several classes of *dummy* described, notably the *substantial dummy*, the *hired dummy*, the *speculative dummy* and the *stringing* (probably this means hoaxing) *dummy*.

The *medium* was usually a person who acted on behalf of a squatter, part of whose land had been offered for sale by the Government at a land lottery. The *medium* took lot-tickets, attended the drawing, and, if his ticket were drawn before his principal's land was gone, selected it and then handed it back to the squatter on the payment of an attendance fee. Thus *medium* was more or less a synonym for *dummy*, and the terms *mediumism* and *dummyism* were used to describe the practice. Between 1865 and 1896 many derivatives of *dummy* came into currency, among the long-since forgotten elaborations being: *dummy bummer* (1882), *sub-dummies* (1890), *dummy-proof* (1891), *dummy-swindler* (1896) and *dummydom* (1882).

⁷ In their "State Socialism in New Zealand", Le Rossignol and Stewart say that "*Spotting* consisted in buying small sections of from 20 to 100 acres so as to include all the available creeks, rendering the adjoining ridges secure from purchase owing to lack of water." The authors add that,

"*Gridironing* consisted in buying a series of 20-acre sections so surveyed as to leave 19 acres unbought between each two sections bought; and as no one could buy less than 20 acres without going to auction, the alternating 19-acre sections were left to be occupied by the runholder."

2.—THE BACKBLOCKS

Virile though it may sound, the expression *Great Outback* leaves too much to be taken for granted. We have many synonyms to give us richer pictures of our vast inland country. At the end of last century when the "Bulletin" was at the peak of its influence, the violently pro-Australian writers who filled its pages with bush and outback lore strove to outdo each other in the propagation of terms for the inland.

Here are some of their best offerings: *back-of-beyond*, (also *back-o'-beyond*), *outback*, *wayback*, *rightback*, *back-o'-Bourke* (New South Wales), *back-o'-outback*, *beyond outback*, *behind outback*, *set-o'-sun*, *death-o'-day*, *past-west*, *westest-west*, *beyond set-o'-sun*, *right behind death-o'-day*, *right at the rear of back-of-outback*.

These were, in the main, variations on the theme of *backblocks*. The use of *block* for an area of land was applied originally in the 1850s to areas which the Government had split up for settlement. Today, we have blocks varying in size from a few acres to 10,000 square miles, but they are still known as blocks.

A *backblock* was originally more or less what it purported to be—a block or section of land in a remote part of a sheep or cattle station. But as these *backblocks* were populated the term came to denote inland country in general. By 1878 Boldrewood was using it in "Ups and Downs", and derivatives such as *back-blocker* and *backblockser*, for a person who hails from the wayback country, were putting down their roots. In 1879 the Sydney "Telegraph"⁸ gives us "drawing-room *backblockers*".

These by no means exhaust the terms for our country or parts of it. The *mallee*, the *mulga* and the *big scrub* contain stories in themselves; so do the *Overland*, the *black north*, the *back door*⁹ and those long-established expressions, *never never*, *never land*, *never country*, the *Centre*, *Red Centre*, *Dead Heart*. Henry Lawson¹⁰ weighs in with such additional terms for our remote inland as *No Man's Land*, the *No More* and *Nevermore*. Even the roundabout description *Land of Sin, Sweat and Sorrow*¹¹ has been in use for half a century. These, however, are mainly blanket terms that are colourful without being specific.

⁸ 2 July 1879.

⁹ "The forgotten lands that border the state (inland border) corners."—I. L. Idriess, "The Great Boomerang" (1941).

¹⁰ "In the Days When the World was Wide" (1896).

¹¹ Kenneth Mackay, "Out Back" (1893).

Something more detailed is apparent, however, in the following: *Bay of Biscay country*, "land with a surface of alternate hillocks and hollows"¹²; *blind country*, closed-in country of colourless type and of little worth; *buck-shot country*, "soil, generally poor in phosphates, containing sperules of pisolitic ironstone"¹³; *burnt grass country*, areas where there is a rich growth of grass after the district has been burnt off; *dead men's graves*, as for Bay of Biscay country; *debil debil* (or *devil devil*) *country*, any rough pitted country, especially land pocked with *bilby holes*¹⁴ or *crabholes*¹⁵; *drummy country*, hollow, rough country in the outback where fodder is poor; *fly country*, sections of the inland where the fly pest is particularly bad¹⁶; *mickery country*, country which holds moisture after rain or which is of swampy "soak" type; *skeleton flats*, flat areas of land upon which the trees have been ringbarked and are dead; *quartz downs*, country in which the topsoil has been blown away from an underlying quartz base; *basins*, open valleys near the tops of hills¹⁷; *black spring*, "a narrow hill, rising out of some rich, dark soil"¹⁸; *jumping sandhills*, sand-dunes that are blown about by the wind in the inland deserts; and *knife edges*, as certain razor-back sandhills are known.

Although neither *gully* nor *creek* is Australian in origin, both have been given meanings and applications in this country so wide that it would be almost impossible for us to part with them. As a broad definition, a *gully*, from the Australian point of view, is "any geographical indentation from a fair-sized drain to a Grand Canyon". Our use of *creek* is just as wide. Both terms have been in Australian use since the 1790s; they are commemorated in scores of place-names.¹⁹ J. S. Farmer states

¹² The definition given in the "Modern Standard English Dictionary" (1939).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Holes made by the Australian marsupial "rabbit" or *bilby*. Whence, any holes of similar type.

¹⁵ Specifically, the holes burrowed by the Australian land crab or crayfish. "Also, name applied to the undulating hollows formed by the action of water and the subsidence of earth over these burrows, common throughout Australia and dangerous to horsemen."—J. Lake in "Webster's Dictionary" (1898).

¹⁶ "It seems an unfortunate habit of Australians," remarked Judge Sheridan in Sydney, 1937, "to speak through their teeth as if they came from the *fly country*, afraid to open their mouths for fear of flies."

¹⁷ "All the highest tops of a run are sometimes called the *basins*."—Acland, "Sheep Station Glossary".

¹⁸ Recorded in 1848 by H. W. Haygarth, "Bush Life in Australia", but apparently long-since obsolete.

¹⁹ Some uses of *creek* in place names were given earlier. Here are some *gullies*: Wattle Gully, Fern-tree Gully, Italian Gully (Victoria);

in his "Dictionary of Americanisms" (1889) that the U.S. use of *creek* was—until that time anyway—confined to a small stream or brook. The Australian application has always been broader than this.

In the outback the word is often rendered *crick*—a dialectal development which we apparently share with the U.S.

The original forms of both *soak* and *waterhole*, which have been current in Australia for many generations, are to be found in English dialect and represent a small part of a great debt we owe to provincial forms of the language.

"How is it," asked a correspondent in a Sydney journal in 1906, "if a person leaves the coast to go inland, they say he is going *outback*, and when he reaches the very interior he's right *outside*?" That question has probably puzzled many people, but it is worked out like this: If you are far inland you are on the outer rim of civilization, you are *outback*, *outbush*,²⁰—you are, in short, right outside, and the farther inland you go the more *outside* your surroundings become. When a man from the far interior comes to the city he says that he is coming *inside*. From the bushman's point of view an *inside* area is one that is well populated and long settled, but as far as he is concerned the real *inside* is the city. The city man is inclined to forget that these were originally bush terms and that they represent the bushman's attitude. When we come across the use of *outsider* for a squatter living in far inland areas, in E. B. Kennedy's "Four Years in Queensland" (1870), it is not meant slightly, but as a statement of fact.

Our uses of *up* and *down* also need explanation. One always goes *up the bush* when one goes inland; and one goes *down to the city* when the journey is in the other direction. Indeed, *up the bush* has become synonymous with outback or inland. Thus the Sydney "Telegraph" of 1 February 1940 asked in a leader: "Canberra—a small town up the bush, or the National Capital?"

On the other hand we find that a Chatham Islander who is making a journey to New Zealand, or a Norfolk Islander making a trip to Sydney, always speaks of *going up* to the city, and his return trip is always *going down*. When Australian settlers

Flowery Gully (Tasmania); Pine Gully and Golden Gully (N.S.W.); Mine Gully, Baker's Gully (South Australia); Bell's Gully, Campbell's Gully, Cherry Gully (Queensland).

²⁰ This term is not heard often, in spite of the fact that Mrs Aeneas Gunn uses it nearly fifty times in "We of the Never Never" (1907).

crossed the Tasman to Canterbury, N.Z., they spoke of *going down* (not "over") to New Zealand. Lawson gives "*down* in Maoriland" and "*down* on Auckland gum-fields" in "While the Billy Boils".

Both *station* and *run* have acquired highly important indigenous meanings in Australia. The former is distinctively our own and came into currency in the early 1830s or perhaps a little before. The earliest printed use of it is in the form *stock station*, but it appears to have been applied originally to a homestead and outbuildings rather than to a squatter's property as a whole. The latter sense did not take long to develop, however, and after 1845 many allied terms are to be found: *heifer station* (1845), *head station* (1848), *home station* (1853), *out-station* (1846) and *outstationed* (1853), *outside station* (1878), *back station* (1890). Derivatives worth noting are: *station black*, an aboriginal; *station super*, a manager; *station mark*, a brand; *station-bred* (stock), stock bred on a station; and *station jack*, the name given to a kind of meat pudding made by mixing a pastry and then adding chopped beef, after which it is boiled.

Run made its first appearances in the forms *stockrun* (1825) and *sheep-run* (1826).

In numerous cases already we have seen how Australia took old English words and remodelled their meanings to suit her own requirements. One of the best examples of this is *paddock* which was in use in sixteenth century England for a small field or meadow. In Australia there is no limit to the size of a *paddock*: it may be one acre or 60,000 acres, but it is a *paddock* as long as it is enclosed by a fence. We have also made a useful verb out of it: *to paddock land*, to fence it; *to paddock sheep*, to place them in a fenced pasture. Combined forms worth noting are: *accommodation paddock*, a field near a rural hotel where stock may be pastured overnight; *cultivation paddock*, a field used for raising grain and vegetables (1853); *branding paddock*, a slang term used by soldiers for a parade ground (1919); *heifer paddock*, a school for girls (1885); *saddling paddock*, a suitable alfresco site for amorous dalliance.

On the subject of fences, the Australian contributions are worth listing. Here are some of the more notable, most of which are self-explanatory: *deadwood fence* (1844), *dog-leg* or *dog-legged fence* (1854), *kangaroo fence* (1854), *chock-and-log fence* (1872), *rough-and-tumble fence* (1875) and *cockatoo fence* (1884),

the last—as already noted—being used for a fence on a small farmer's property.

The *sliprail* should not be forgotten. This term has well over a century of applied history in Australia.

The *swing-gate* is even more important, for, like the *stump-jump plough*, it is an Australian invention of inestimable worth to the farmer. The *swing-gate* was invented by Lockhart Morton to facilitate sheep-drafting in yards²¹; the *stump-jump plough* is used for ploughing rough partly-timbered land.

"Without the stump-jumping plough," says the "Australian Encyclopaedia",²² "the mallee lands of Victoria and South Australia might never have been scientifically cultivated for wheat." It was patented in 1882, having been invented six years earlier.

3.—WORKERS

In the late 1840s when *colonial experience* meant finding one's feet in the new land of the south, many names were developed to describe rural workers of all types. The great bulk of those names survive today.

One of the first was *jackeroo*, used originally to describe a young Englishman learning sheep or cattle farming; he was a *colonial experienter*, a *new chum*, a *cadet* and, later, an *archie*, who usually bought his knowledge with a premium. Sometimes he was employed on the more exacting basis of *even terms*, which meant working for his keep.

As the London "Times" once suggested, *jackeroo* was practically the equivalent of tenderfoot, but in later days it became more a synonym for station-hand. One theory says that it is derived from the Queensland aboriginal term *tchaceroo*, used to denote a bird, the shrike, because of its garrulous nature. According to legend the blacks applied the term to a party of German missionaries who settled near Brisbane; thence to all white men. The word may, however, be a corruption of *Jacky Raw*, or a conjunction of *Jack* and *kangaroo*. We have made a verb out of *jackeroo*, and now speak of *jackerooing* (just as we speak of *rouseabouting*), for work as a station-hand.

In "Bail Up!" (1890) H. Nisbet uses the unusual form *jackeries* for "favoured station-hands". Although this did not

²¹ "The most important pastoral invention except the shearing machine."—"The Modern Standard English Dictionary" (1939).

²² Vol. ii, p. 510.

have wide use it is interesting to note that, much earlier—in 1853—a writer had referred to a squatter as a *Jacky Rue*, “as they are called by the Sydneysites”.

The past few years have given us a variant in *jillaroo*, a female station-hand (the play is on Jack and Jill), especially used during World War No. 2 for a Land Girl.

An alternative for jackeroo is *ringneck*—originally applied to new immigrants because of their collar-wearing habits; there was a fancied resemblance to the light-coloured band round the neck of the Ringneck Parakeet.

Somewhat similar in use is *leatherneck*, for a handyman on a station, otherwise called *rouseabout*, *roustabout* (this was the U.S. use for a ship’s deckhand), *rouser*, *rousie*, *knockabout*, *blue-tongue* (after the lizard of that name), *spoonbill*, *jack*, *loppy*, *wop wop*,²³ and *wood-and-water joey* (sometimes abbreviated to the simple *joey*).

A station manager was formerly known as a *super* or *cove*—both date from before 1850—or, if in a small way of business, a *pannikin boss*. An overseer is a *packsaddle*. An analogous term is found in old woolshed slang. When shearers work in two rows the outside row is referred to as the *packhorse side*, possibly because it is under closer observation and has to work harder.

Outback workers are subject to a number of maladies which have acquired localized names. Among them are: *Barcoo rot*, *Kennedy rot* or *Queensland sore*, a festering sore difficult to cure under inland conditions—it rapidly disappears when the sufferer eats plenty of fruit or green vegetables²⁴; *Barcoo spew*, *Barcoo vomit* or *Belyando spew*,²⁵ a sickness characterized by vomiting after food is taken; *blight* (1826), *sand blight* (1846) and *sandy blight* (1859), a form of ophthalmia in which the eye feels full of sand; *fly blight* (1848), *swelling blight* (1867), *fly-bung* and

²³ *Leathernecks*, *spoonbills*, *loppies* and *jacks* are used for rouseabouts in the “Bulletin”, 1 October, 1898; *loppy* and *wop wop* in the same journal, 1 September 1904.

²⁴ In South Africa it is called *Veldt sore* and is probably similar to the *Delhi sore* and *Baghdad date*. The sores occur most frequently on the bridlehand, on which the skin is sometimes broken when a horse, worried by flies, continually jerks at the reins.

²⁵ The Barcoo, Kennedy and Belyando are outback Queensland districts. *Barcoo challenge*, a shearing expression, also hails from the first-named district. It was a challenge for the day’s best tally among shearers, made (i) by scraping the points of a pair of handshears on the woolshed floor or wall, or (ii) by throwing the belly of a fleece over another shearer’s head. *Barcoo buster* is the name given to a westerly gale in outback Queensland—a local variation of *southerly buster*.

bung-eye (1898), an eye ailment caused by fly attacks; and *Darling Pea*, upon which Stephens and O'Brien offer this comment: "One of Australia's poisonous plants; cattle eating it become afflicted with staggers and die: so a man wandering in gait or dazed in appearance is said to be suffering from Darling Pea."

4.—SHEEP

The sheep station and the woolshed have supplied Australia with a wide range of terms. Shepherds have been known variously as *lizards*, *crawlers*, *snails* and *motherers*. Woolshed workers include the *fleece-picker* or *fleecy*, the *penner-up*, the *broomie* or *sweeper*, the *skirter*, *dagger* and *dag-picker*, the *tarboy*, *tick-jammer* (one who bales wool) and *wool-roller*.

But perhaps we are a little ahead of ourselves, for the true foundation of the *woolshed* is the *board* and we should know a little about this before we begin inspecting the men who work on it. Strictly speaking the *board* is that part of a woolshed where the sheep are shorn, but its application is often wider. For instance, Boldrewood refers in "Ups and Downs" (1878) to "100,000 sheep on the board". He does not, of course, imply that all these sheep will be on the board at the same time, but that they are due to be shorn during one season. The term is also applied to "the whole number of shearers employed in a single woolshed"—thus we have *boss-over-the-board* and *man-over-the-board* for the woolshed overseer. To *clear the board* is to complete shearing (or to *cut out a shed*) and to *ring the board* is to prove the most expert shearer in a shed.

Much woolshed lore is preserved in the pages of the "Bulletin", especially during the closing years of last century. A fine collection of shearing terms is given, for instance, in the 17 December 1898 issue of the journal. Here is a selection: *drummer*, the laziest and therefore the slowest shearer in a shed; *cobbler*, a dirty, sticky, matted and wrinkly sheep (not always the last, but often left to the last in shearing); *to battle for a cut*, to look for a job as a shearer; *fine cut*, a particular boss; *rough cut*, an easy-going boss who does not mind rough shearing; *to pink 'em*, to shear a sheep closely so that the pink flesh shows; *to toma-hawk*, to shear roughly and gash a sheep; a *chip* or *wire*, a reprimand; *to shot* or *spear* a man, to fire him; *to wait for a death*, to hang around a woolshed waiting until someone is sacked in order to secure a job; a *gun*, an expert shearer, "generally speaking, a man who can shear over 200 a day"; *snagger*,

a shearer who is learning the trade and handling less than fifty sheep a day; *rosellas*, sheep that are shedding their wool; *stragglers*, sheep missed in the general shearing which are mustered later and shorn at the *straggler-shearing*; *raddled*, robbed —“Before the Union was established squatters used to raddle, i.e. mark with red or blue raddle, any sheep they didn't deem satisfactorily shorn. Whole pensful were often thus turned out and not paid for.”

Handshears are known as *daggers*, *jingling johnnies*, *bright and shiny swords* and *tongs*. Combs used in machine shearing are *merry widows*. *To carry the drum* means to work slowly or lazily; so do the expressions *to camp* and *to drag the chain*. The last phrase appears to come originally from ploughing or some similar work in which horses are used; a horse that is not pulling its weight will drag its chains on the ground. *To swing the gate* is used of a fast and expert shearer, better known to most Australians as a *ringer*.

This word *ringer* came into use more than half a century ago, being applied to a shearer who could *run rings round* his fellow workers. Attempts have been made to link these expressions with the game of quoits or with a game in which horseshoes are thrown at a stick in the ground. A writer in the “Bulletin” of 22 April 1899 declares: “*Ringer* and *good iron* are both derived from the game of quoits; a *ringer* being a quoit which rings the peg, while *good iron* corresponds to *good ball* at cricket.” The theory may be correct; it certainly cannot be positively denied. Our phrase *to run rings around* has now gone out into the world. In a London “Times” leader of 3 January 1940, the version *make rings around* was used. Lawson gave the version *write rings round* in “Over the Sliprails” (1900).

Shearers have also been called *woolhawks* (especially if expert), *brutes* and *bladesmen*, although the last term is going out of fashion because most shearing is now done with machines. *To chip* or *chop* a sheep is to gash it or to remove *bootlaces* from its hide. *To barrow* is to shear or partly shear a sheep for a shearer. (In his “Sheep Station Glossary” Acland notes: “‘No barrowing allowed on the board’ was at one time a rule when the Shearers’ Union got into the award. Boys often finish or begin a sheep for a shearer who, of course, is responsible for its being properly shorn.”) *To run a sheep* is to shear off only the top wool; *to rough a sheep* is to shear it badly; *to put Kinchela*

on shears means to sharpen them²⁶; *to play the piano* is to run one's fingers over the backs of sheep to find the easiest to shear; and a *run* is a two-hour spell of shearing. (The ordinary day for a shearer is divided into four runs of two hours each, as follows: 7.30 to 9.30 a.m., 10 a.m. to noon; 1 to 3 p.m., 3.30 to 5.30 p.m. The periods between the first and second runs and between the third and fourth runs are called *smoke-ohs*.)

Popular names have also been given to various parts of hand-shears, namely, *cockspur* or *knocker*, a stop fastened to the heel of one blade to prevent its crossing the other blade; *driver*, a strap through which the hand is passed to hold the shears; *bows*, the curved portions of the shears above the handle; *yakka*, the pull-back of a pair of shears.

A stroke with the handshears is known to the initiated as a *blow*; a *cocky's clip* is given to a sheep when practically every vestige of wool is removed from its body (supposedly reflecting the parsimonious nature of the average cocky); *to eaglehawk* is to pluck wool from a dead sheep.

The use of *cut out* as a noun and a verb deserves special mention. During the 1840s it was given its original currency to describe the separating of a selected animal or group of animals from a herd of cattle. By the 1880s its application had been extended and a woolshed was said to have *cut out* when the season's shearing was completed. By analogy we find that a shed *cuts in* when shearing commences. These shearing uses hailed from the actual cutting of wool; we find, for instance, that a shearer gets a *cut* (it is also called a *stand* or *pen*) when he is employed. He also *cuts out* a cheque at shearing, and he *cuts out* a fellow shearer of, say, twenty sheep a day when he shears twenty more than his companion. An important general use is derived from the verb: when any job is completed it is said *to cut out* or *to be cut out*.

Box, for a mixing of sheep, is also well rooted in our language. It came into use about 1870, but ten years later Boldrewood was using it in "Robbery Under Arms" as equivalent to "confused" or "muddled". Today a person who is in a quandary or confusion is said to be *boxed up*; to confuse or muddle something is *to make a box of it*. These senses are all derived from the original rural use.

²⁶ From a pamphlet on the care and sharpening of shears by one Kinchela, according to a writer in the "Bulletin" of 25 September 1897.

Among our many words for sheep, none is better known than *jumbuck*. Writing in 1896, A. Meston, of Brisbane, stated:

The word *jumbuck* for sheep appears [in aboriginal speech] as jim jombock, dombock and dumbog. In each case it meant the white man preceding a shower, to which a flock of sheep bore a strong resemblance. It seemed the only thing to which the aboriginal imagination could compare it.

This explanation has been generally accepted—at any rate, no better has been offered.

Here are some more popular terms for sheep: *woolly* as *monkey* (a shepherd is known as a *monkey dodger*); *nowler*, difficult sheep to shear; *freezer*, a sheep bred for export as frozen mutton; *hermit* or *placer*, a sheep which becomes attached to a spot and refuses to budge; *hospital sheep*, a sick sheep placed alone; *stranger*, a stray sheep; *barebelly*, a sheep that has lost the wool on its belly or inner portions of the hind legs (*be* for wool shorn from the belly of a sheep is another Australian use); *broken-mouth*, an eight-tooth sheep that is losing its teeth; *gummy*, a sheep that has lost or is losing its teeth. Acland notes in his "Sheep Station Glossary":

An eight-tooth or full-mouthed sheep is one whose fourth pair of teeth are rising and obviously new, i.e. four to four and a half years old in an average country. The sheep is full-mouthed as long as the teeth remain perfect; when they decline the sheep becomes *failing mouthed*, *broken-mouthed*, and finally a *gummy*.

In addition to "standard" terms like *drop*—"the act of dropping or giving birth to young; the young so dropped"—*shed* and *woolshed*, Australia has also been responsible for *sheep-dip*, *sheep-wash*, *sheep-yard*, *wool scour* and *depot shed*. The last is a type of woolshed found "in many districts . . . where small graziers, who have no woolshed of their own, may send their sheep for contract shearing".²⁷

The wool-baling terms *to dump*, *double dump*, and *spring press* (a makeshift wool press) are also Australian. The phrase *in the wool*, used of sheep ready for shearing, *out of the wool* and *off the shears*, used of sheep that have just been shorn, may also be noted. The cloth covering in which a carcass of lamb or mutton is enclosed for export is known as a *shirt*.

Among wool-trade expressions apparently original to Australia are *cowtail* and *say-cast*, the coarsest hair at the tail end of

²⁷ The "Australian Encyclopaedia", vol. ii, p. 447.

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A
DICTIONARY
OF
AUSTRALASIAN WORDS,

CONTAINING

MORE THAN SEVEN HUNDRED NEW WORDS AND NEW MEANINGS OF OLD WORDS,
NEW PHRASES, ETC., WHICH HAVE ENTERED THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
FROM AUSTRALIA, TASMANIA, AND NEW ZEALAND.

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

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PREFACE.

Of the words, phrases, and meanings of words that have come into the English language from the Australasian colonies, many are already included in the body of the *International Dictionary*, and these are not repeated in this Supplement. More than seven hundred, however, appear in the Supplement for the first time. The additions consist (1) of words derived from the aboriginal dialects of Australia (marked "Aboriginal") and the Maori language of New Zealand; (2) of new words or phrases formed by the colonists on the basis of English words already existing; (3) of provincial English words which have gained a wider currency from their adoption into colonial use; (4) of scientific names in common vernacular use as the designations of Australasian plants or animals, and (5) of English words and phrases which have acquired a sense in the colonies differing more or less from that which they bear in England. Of the aboriginal and Maori words the majority are the names of plants and animals peculiar to Australasia (as, *batemamula*, *bagong*, *katigis*, etc.); others are the names of weapons or utensils (as, *mere*, *wahiti*, *warerohi*, etc.) or of Maori or aboriginal Australian ranks, customs, or institutions (as, *hara*, *ruangatia*, *tapa*, etc.). The new words and phrases of English stock include many names of Australasian plants and animals (as, *axibakeri*, *fortwaw*, *schnapper*, etc.), and others coined to meet the conditions of life in a new country (as, *free-select*, *sunflower*, *waragoin*, etc.). The English words used in new senses fall, for the most part, into the same classes: as, (a) *beech*, *oak*, *oat*, *salmon*, etc., and (b) *block*, *currency*, *payable*, *spell*, etc. The technical language of mining, grazing, and sheep-raising has contributed many new words or new meanings (as, *crash*, *drafting yard*, *penner*, *weaner*, *lotion*, *pad-dick*, *washdirt*, etc.). Slang words have been very sparingly admitted, and only when they seem to have established themselves firmly in colonial usage.

The definitions have been made as exact as possible, and have usually been supported by illustrative quotations or by the citation of some literary authority. To this end a large number of books of travel, scientific works, and works of poetry and fiction, together with a multitude of Australasian magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets, have been systematically examined by the special and the supervisory editor. A list of the authors, etc., referred to by name will be found at p. 2010, but many others have been consulted.

The vocabulary might easily have been

LAKE'S SUPPLEMENT TO WEBSTER

Published as a Supplement to the 1898 edition of *Webster's International Dictionary*, this was the first detailed list of Australian words included in an oversea dictionary.

fleece, *fribby*, small, short (applied to locks), *fribs*, second cuts and small short wool, and *mushy*, *open*, *frizzy*, *perished* (used of a fleece). Many terms used by Australian wool-traders come from old English dialect, including *cots*, matted locks of wool, *fadge*, an irregular package of wool (less than 11½ lb.), *kemps*, fibres possessing no cellular structure, *moits*, short pieces of stick and scrub, principally found in neck wool, and *noils*, "wasty" portions of wool.

To conclude this section a quotation from Henry Lawson²⁸ on the use of *bell-sheep* is worth repetition:

Shearers are not supposed to take another sheep out of pen when *smoke-ho*, breakfast or dinner bell goes, but some time themselves to get so many sheep out, and *one as the bell goes*, which makes more work for the rouser and entrenches on his smoke-ho, as he must leave his board clean.

5.—CATTLE

Cattle men have been as prolific as sheep men in their propagation of slang terms. Of the *bullocky's*²⁹ influence upon colourful Australian speech more will be said later. In the meantime here are a few of the names by which he and his kind are known: *bull puncher*, *bullocker*, *buffalo navigator*, *bovine puncher*, *ox-persuader*, *horny steerer*, *cow conductor*, *cow spanker*, *cow banger*, *cattle banger*, *steer pilot*, *ringer* (a stockman who travels cattle as distinct from the woolshed ringer) and, of course, the indispensable *boundary-rider*. It should not be thought that because some of these expressions sound unfamiliar they are necessarily obsolete. As recently as June 1942, for instance, a Sydney daily used *oxen-conductor* for a bullock driver.

Apart from their apparently instinctive tendency to *talk bullock*, as A. J. Vogan puts it in his "Black Police", the bullock driver and stockman have invented many terms by which to describe their charges.

Here are some of the best: *clearskin* and *cleanskin*, unbranded animals; *scrubbers*, *bush scrubbers*, *mulga scrubbers*, *mallee pikers*, *kangaroos*, *myalls*, *scrub danglers*, *runabouts*, stock that have run wild and deteriorated in condition; *wind splitters*, *hatracks*, *pigmeaters*, *razorbacks*, scraggy, lean animals; *bang-tails*, cattle that have had the long hair at the end of their tails squared off (whence comes *bangtail muster*)³⁰; *coachers*, tame

²⁸ "In the Days When the World was Wide and Other Verses."

²⁹ *Bullocky* stands both for the

bullock driver and his chief art.—"The Anzac Book" (1916).

³⁰ *Muster* (of stock) and *musterer* are both Australianisms.

cattle used as decoys; *frames*, draught cattle; *stags*, half-grown bulls; *poley*, a dehorned or hornless animal; *snailey*, a cow or bullock with a curled horn; *snagger*, a cow difficult to milk (cow milkers are also called *snaggers*); *beefier*, an animal bred for meat; and *micky*,³¹ an unbranded steer.

For calves we have the expressions *poddy*,³² *poddy-calf*, *bobby calf* and *staggering bob*. The last is not often heard, but is found several times in Australian writings; J. Williams uses it for "meat from newly-born calves" in his "Experiences of a Colonist" (1880), and in "We of the Never Never" Mrs Aeneas Gunn refers to "staggering bob tack" (i.e. food). Our use of *poddy* is probably from the English dialectal *poddy*, fat. How we acquired *bobby calf* is more problematical, but it perhaps came also from English dialect in which *bob* and *bobby* are used for small, common things, as in bobby wren, the common wren.

An old term worth noting, since it has been obsolete for half a century or more, is *Russians* for wild stock, dating from 1847. The version *Rooshians* appears in 1869. An interesting revival, under a disguise difficult to penetrate, occurs in S. H. Roberts's "Squatting Age" (1935) in which he refers to "the wild Bushians".

The continuous lowing of a herd of cattle is termed *roaring*; if they *ring* or show other signs of restlessness they are described as being *rowdy* or *ropeable*. This last term has now ceased to apply solely to stock. Indeed, it is now rarely used in its original connotation: any person who is angry or infuriated may be said in these days to be *ropeable*.³³ Few Australians realize that its first application was to cattle so wild that they could be controlled only by roping.

Cattleman's kid describes methods adopted by ringers and stockmen to calm a restless mob of stock. From the cattle man we have also inherited *moonlighting*, riding after cattle by

³¹ Perhaps from the aboriginal *micky*, quick.

³² Henry Lawson, "While the Billy Boils" (1896), makes a verb of the term, *to poddy*, to hand-feed. Later, the noun broadens in application to apply not only to motherless calves, but also to motherless foals. A writer in the "Bulletin" (8 January 1898) declares that the

terms *poddy-calf* and *poddy-foal* are "heard all over Australia". Later still, in the "Bulletin" of 30 January 1908, *poddy* is used for a motherless lamb. Generally speaking, however, the term is confined to calves.

³³ In outback N.S.W. a casual acquaintance was describing to me how angry another person had been. "He was *ropeable*," he said.

night; to *draft on the camp*; to *cut out stock* and its derivative, *cutter-out*; *crush*, for a funnel-shaped runway used in branding cattle, which dates from the 1870s; *catching pole* (1849) and *roping pole* (1878), a long pole used in a stockyard to drop a noosed rope over the horns or heads of cattle; *breakaway*, a panic rush of stock; *cattle dip* and to *leg-roped*.

The spread of the *cattle tick*—common name of the tick *Boöphilus annulatus*—in Australia since it was first observed about 1880 has produced several associated terms, among them *tick fever*, *redwater*, *tick dip*, *tick worry* (as suffered by stock) and *tick dodger* (an inspector engaged in preventing the spread of ticks). *Redwater* is the popular name for the disease (also called *tick fever*) caused by the minute protozoan blood-parasite, *Babesia bigemina*. This disease is not identical with the original English *redwater*, which is characterized by haemoglobinuria. The descriptive expression *redwater country* is sometimes given to districts in northern Queensland and the Northern Territory where tick fever is prevalent. *Pleuro* and *ploorer* are abbreviated versions of *pleuro-pneumonia*, the cattle disease.

The *Illawarra shorthorn* is an Australian breed of cattle. Incidentally, the *Polworth* is the only new type of sheep we have bred.

Among maladies suffered by sheep are *pink-eye*, a form of ophthalmia caused by dust, which also occurs sometimes in cattle and horses; *cuckoo scab*, a skin disease at the back of the head and ears; and *fly-strike*, the effects of maggot infestation by blowflies.

Bush sickness is a form of stock sickness caused by lack of minerals in pastures. *Take-all* is an Australian name for a wheat disease.

6.—HORSES

Since, as Morris suggested, "all early quotations of *buck* and cognate words are connected with Australia", we are immediately entitled to claim ownership of some highly interesting terms. The verb *to buck*, used to describe the wild jumping and shying of an unbroken horse when saddled or ridden, has been current for nearly a century.

It makes its first appearance in 1848 in the "Statement by Jackey Jackey", an aboriginal, on the death of the explorer, E. B. Kennedy. The native speaks of horses which "*bucked all about*". The verbal noun, *bucking*, was also current in 1848. It is to be found in H. W. Haygarth's "Bush Life in Australia".

From these beginnings we have developed many variations

on the theme—*buckjumping*, *buckjumper*, *bucker*, the nouns *buck* and *buckjump* as distinct from the verbs; *to have a buck in at*, to attempt something; *to buck at*, to resent. In addition we have put into currency the descriptive phrases *to buck a hurricane*, *to buck a town down* and *a horse that can buck its brand off*.³⁴

During the 1890s another set of terms became popular with the introduction of *pigjump*, *pigjumper* and *pigjumping*. It should be noted that *buckjump* and *pigjump* are not synonymous; the *pigjumper* does not bring its feet together in its leaping but holds its legs stiff, whereas the *buckjumper* arches its back and gathers its feet.

Horses are said *to have a busy foot*, *to scratch*, *to split* or *to speel* when they travel fast. The last two expressions are revivals of English dialect, of which the noun *speeler*, a speedy horse, is an Australian extension. *To prop*, to come to a sudden stop when travelling at a fast pace, and *to plant*, to stand perfectly still, both used of horses, date from 1870 or before. The former has become well established in Australia and its application extended considerably. Thus, in the Sydney "Telegraph" of 2 March 1942 a writer tells us: "Big British interests in Thailand *propped* at the last moment and Japan got their holdings intact." Here we find the verb acquiring the meaning "to jib at a command, to refuse to co-operate". Another extension is the adjectival use of *proppy* for a horse that jibs and plays up when ridden or driven. In his "Man-shy" (1931) Frank Dalby Davison writes of a cow that *propped*.

For sixty years, our wild or outlaw horses of the inland have been known as *brumbies*. The origin is obscure. It may come from the surname of Major William Brumby, a once noted Australian horsebreeder (at least, legend says he was), or from the Queensland aboriginal *booramby*, wild. Queensland seems to have been the State where the word was used originally. A writer in the "Bulletin", of 21 March 1896 suggested a derivation from *Baramba*, the name of a creek and station in the Burnett district, Queensland, and another writer in the same journal of 17 September 1898 noted:

I have heard *brumby* used by blacks on the Balonne, Paroo and Bulloo rivers [Queensland] sounded *baroombie* and on one station in particular to distinguish the unbroken from the broken horse.

³⁴ The use of *buck* is not confined to horses. For instance, Henry Lawson, "In the Days When the

World Was Wide" (1896), says "the sheep come *bucking out*" of a pen.

The old Scottish use of *crock* for a broken-down horse has probably influenced the evolution of the Australian out-back slang *crocodile* and *alligator* for a horse. Both *croc* and *crocky* have been employed similarly, the latter dating from 1893. The process seems to have been something like this: from the Scottish *crock*, by extension to *crocodile*, by transference to *alligator*, by clipping to *croc*; so that *crock* and *croc* (although they could be spelt the same way) are, in reality, different terms.

Moke is another dialectal term we have put to our own uses. In England it denoted an ass. Here we have applied it to a horse, especially one of inferior type. A similar process has been gone through with *cuddy*, used in North English dialect for a donkey. In Australia we use it for a small, solidly built horse, although a more popular term for an animal of this type is *nugget* (whence the widely-current adjective *nuggety*, sturdy, compactly-built, used of both animals and humans).

Taffy horse, a chestnut with a lighter—often a silver—mane and tail (from a fancied resemblance to the coarse sweetmeat known as *taffy*); *creamy*, a white or cream-coloured horse; *tuppy*, a worthless horse (English dialect had *tup*, a ram); *nut*, a difficult horse to break, i.e. a hard nut to crack; and *waler*, originally a horse exported from New South Wales to India for army use (in modern times, a light type of army horse used in Australia)—these are also worth noting.

To be thrown from a horse is to *get slung* or *shanghaied*; to break and train a horse is to *rough it off*; a harness cask is a *round yard*.

A correspondent tells me that an *Empress* was “a much thought-of and especially elegant side-saddle supposed to be a model of that used by the Empress of Austria”. The term was apparently current in the 1890s. *Dee* or *D* is the name given to a D-shaped loop or clip on a saddle; a *monkey* or *monkey-strap*, a looped strap on the offside of a saddle pommel, used by inferior “rough-riders” (this is an English term, although the verb *to rough ride* is apparently Australian) in mounting and during the bucking of a horse; a *cradle* is a wooden frame that fits on a pack-saddle for use when posts or logs are carried.

A word with a truly “horsy” flavour is *flash*, as used to describe the skittishness of a highly strung or unruly horse. Here is an observation on the Australian uses of the word by J. Kirby, “Old Times in the Bush of Australia” (1895):

I think it conveys more meaning than any of the other slang words we have in this colony. *Flash* is applied to anyone who is proud and has nothing to be proud of. It also applies to the manner in which a kerchief is worn round the neck; to bell-bottomed trousers; the way in which a hat is worn; to conversation in which every second word is an oath; or to a shearer. . . . In those days [i.e. the middle of the century] *flash* and *shearer* were such as linked together and seemed inseparable in our minds.

Kirby is somewhat astray in the senses he gives to the word as Australian. Its connotations of ostentatious, boastful, etc., had been anticipated in English slang, but we have probably put *flash* to better use in the antipodes than England ever did. In New Guinea coastal pidgin, *flash* and its corrupted form *belas* mean "to dress brightly, to decorate the person or property".

The *overlander* and *boundary-rider* are closely linked in their destinies with the horse. The original *overlander* was a traveller who made long expeditions with stock from one colony to another. Settlers who arrived by the *overland* came to be known by that name during the middle of last century. Today, *sundowners*, *whalers*, *coasters* and other tramps are sometimes called *overland men* because of the distances they travel.

The *boundary-rider* is a station employee who patrols the fenced boundaries of a property to prevent stock straying and to mend fences. In the "Australasian" of 14 July 1865 reference is made to "the shepherds and *boundary riders* of the past and present", which perhaps shows that the word was originally used on sheep stations.³⁵ In New Zealand a shepherd who prevents sheep passing an unfenced boundary is called a *boundary-keeper*. A sheep dog chained to a kennel at a gateway on a road to prevent sheep passing through is called a *boundary-dog*.

It was possibly through the agency of the horse that Australia acquired those useful expressions, *double-bank* and *double-dink*, employed mainly today when a cyclist gives another person a ride on the bar of his bicycle. *Doubler*, *dink* and *dinkie* are interchangeable variations.

"Rose and I *double-banked* on a fat round pony named Sulky," writes Bernard O'Reilly, in "Green Mountains" (1940). "Kelly came down from Black Mountain every Sunday after that, and we went *double dinking* on his white mare," says Eve Langley in "The Pea Pickers" (1942).

Other expressions from the Australian world of horses³⁶

³⁵ The *boundary-rider* is also known as a *topwire lizard*; the use of *lizard* for a shepherd was noted earlier.

³⁶ Indigenous racing terms are dealt with in Chapter IX.

include: *to hang up a horse*, to dismount and, originally at any rate, to drop the bridle over a hitching post; *to run up a horse*, "to fetch or bring a horse from pasture" (used first by Boldrewood); *to turn on a cabbage leaf*, used of a spirited horse that can wheel smartly; and that measure of contempt for an animal, *three-cornered*, which dates from 1848.

7.—DOGS

This country has been responsible for the development of several distinct types of dogs—notably the *Australian terrier*, *Sydney silky*, *bush greyhound*, *barb*, *bluey* and *kelpie*.

The *kelpie*, which is a smooth-haired, prick-eared dog, was evolved for handling sheep in the 1870s. There are four varieties—the black (better known as the *barb*), the black-and-tan, the blue and the red. The original Kelpie was a crossbred bitch, with dingo and black-and-tan collie blood in her. She was mated with a smooth-haired Scotch collie. One of her pups was called Kelpie because it resembled her closely. This young bitch won the first sheep dog trial held in Australia (at Forbes, N.S.W.) and, in turn, her pups became so famous that she gave her name to the breed. One of these pups was given to a stockman who named him *Barb* after the 1866 winner of the Melbourne Cup. He proved such an excellent sire that he, also, gave his name to a breed.

The *bluey* is a type of cattle dog: originally a cross of the smooth-haired Scotch sheep dog and the dingo. The first dogs of this type were produced in the 1840s and were known as *Hall's heelers* (after an N.S.W. squatter named Hall). Later, Dalmatian and kelpie blood was fused with the cross and the breed was improved.

The *Australian terrier* is a variety of terrier which first received official recognition in 1909; the *bush greyhound*, which is a cross between the greyhound and the *kangaroo dog* (a dog evolved specially for hunting kangaroos), has also been developed this century. The *beardy* or *bearded collie* is a type of sheep dog with long hair that resembles the hair of a Skye terrier.

Outback slang terms for dogs include: *woolclasser*, a dog that bites sheep; *topsider*, *Sunday dog*, *sundowner*, *sooner* (i.e. one that would sooner rest than work), *pancleaner* and *tripehound*. A dog trained to run across the backs of sheep when they are yarded is called a *backing dog*.

CHAPTER IV

THE BUSH

1.—BUSH, BRUSH AND SCRUB

ALTHOUGH in the early 1890s Henry Lawson was moved to write:

Don't you fancy that the poets better give the bush a rest,
Ere they raise a just rebellion in the over-written west?

it was during that period, when bush lyricists could be found at almost every outback crossroads and when the "Bulletin" was thumping away on its nationalist drum, that bush slang and idiom came into their own. They had been on their way up for a long time. Their influence had spread so widely that it is difficult in many cases to decide where the story of the bush ends and that of the city begins.

Writing of ordinary Australian conversation as heard by a visitor in 1879, J. Inglis¹ noted that "the speech of the shebeen, the stockyard and the bush shanty will often be ostentatiously obtruded". Here was a mixture. There was no watertight compartment between outback slang and city slang; they had broken their banks and had begun to merge into the vast sea of words which is our language today. If, therefore, the chapters of this book are entitled "The Soil", "The Bush", and so on, they should not be regarded as self-contained. These headings are used for convenience.

The first term of significance in bush vernacular was, of course, the word *bush* itself. Derived from the Dutch *bosch* it arrived in Australia at the beginning of last century via the Cape of Good Hope—not as Mencken suggests via America—and by 1820 had more or less completely ousted the English "woods" and "forest". By 1837 it was being used to describe the country in general outside a capital and had already begun to acquire important variations. There are a multitude of these, among which the following are important: *to go bush*, *take to*

¹ "Our Australian Cousins."

the bush, up the bush, bush apes (rural or bush workers; fruit-pickers in South Australia), *bush baptist* (a person of doubtful religious persuasion), *bush boy, bush bread, bush brother* and *bush brotherhood* (the religious organization), *bush carpenter, bushed, bushfire, to bush it, bush lawyer, bushman, bushman's clock* (the kookaburra), *bushranger, bush scrubber, bush telegrams, bush telegraph* (means whereby rumours and reports are circulated) with its modern variants *bush wireless*² and *bush radio, to bushwhack, bushwhacker*,³ *bushwoman, bushy* (a person who lives in the bush), *bushwalker* (one who hikes in the bush), and *bushytail* (crafty).

Bushed, meaning lost in the bush, has been used since the 1850s, but its meaning has now been extended. In 1885 Mrs R. C. Praed ("Australian Life: Black and White") described a person lost in the confusion of London's streets as *bushed*. We can even—by a strange stroke of literary imagery—be *bushed at sea*. Charles Barrett shows how this can be done in his "Coast of Adventure" (1941). He asks:

Had we [i.e. a small ship] gone wide of the light; become *bushed* in the great Van Diemen Gulf [in the Northern Territory] where a small craft could easily be wrecked in half a gale?

In addition, a man who is in a quandary or confusion is said to be *bushed*; and to *bush up* a person is to confuse him.

As pointed out earlier, the original *bush telegraph* was a confederate of bushrangers who warned them of police movements. Gradually the expression became synonymous with any rumour or false report, and several other terms with similar connotations sprang into use. Among these are *bush wire, mulga, mulga wire, gidyea, sugarcane, Tom Collins* and, probably best known of all, *furphy*. Half a century ago Tom Collins was a mythical being to whom rumours and reports of doubtful authenticity were attributed in the Riverina and other country areas in the south-eastern states. Tom Collins was the nom-de-plume chosen by the Australian writer, Joseph Furphy, best known for "Such is Life" (1903). By a strange stroke of destiny it was Joseph's brother John, through another agency altogether, who gave the word *furphy* to our language.

² As in Sydney "Telegraph", 14 May 1942: "The *bush wireless* reports that the next beer issue is due this week."

³ Used originally in the American

Civil War for a deserter who raided defenceless towns and homes for food and valuables; in Australia a person who lives in the bush.

At the outbreak of World War No. 1 the metal-bodied carts used in Victorian military camps for water and sanitary purposes were supplied from the foundry established by Furphy at Shepparton (Victoria) in 1874. The name of Furphy appeared on each vehicle, together with the slogan: "Good, better, best; never let it rest, till your good is better, and your better, best." Camp rumours or latrine rumours came to be known as *furphies*, and from its original military use it spread into popular speech. *Furphy king* and *furphy merchant*, for retailers of rumour, are derivatives.

Although a utility term of long standing, *bush dray* is also Australian (so is *bullock-dray*). The original English use of *dray* was for a brewer's delivery cart. In 1848 H. W. Haygarth noted that it was "the only vehicle used in New South Wales for the conveyance of wool and other produce." *Dray-track* is a derivative.

Bushfire blonde, a red-haired girl or woman; *full of bushfire*, full of vim and spirit; *Sydney or the bush*, a phrase indicating the choice of a final alternative; and the time-honoured chant of derision *What's this, bush week?* are a few more expressions we have wrung out of that Dutch word *bosch* in a little over a century.⁴

Although neither *brush* nor *scrub* was originally Australian, both have been given particular uses in this part of the world. *Brush* preceded *bush* in Australia and kept pace with it for several generations. As a result a section of our flora and fauna bears its imprint, e.g. *brush apple*, *brush cherry*, *brush turkey*. The "Oxford Dictionary's" definition (quoted as used especially in the United States, Canada and Australia), "the small growing trees or shrubs of a wood; a thicket of small trees or underwood", is scarcely applicable to Australia where we know nothing of woods and thickets. In the eastern states there is a particularized use of *brush* for jungle vegetation, especially a jungle-filled valley or a densely covered stretch of bushland.

Both America and Australia borrowed *scrub* from the English (it came originally from Danish dialect, *skrub*, brushwood, and the Norwegian *skrubba*, the dwarf cornel-tree) and put it to extensive uses. It probably features more in Australian speech than in American. We have extended it a good deal past the standard English status of "stunted trees or shrubs, brush-

⁴ *Absentees*, or well-to-do Australians, who preferred life in the West End of London before World War

No. 2, were known as *Piccadilly bushmen*.

wood; also a tract of country overgrown with 'scrub'.⁵ The Pillaga Scrub of New South Wales is a forest covering 625,000 acres, with trees up to a hundred feet tall. The Mallee Scrub of northern Victoria is an immense area of *Eucalyptus dumosa* which is something more than a shrub or brushwood.

Here is a group of Australian derivatives: *scrub cattle*, *scrub danglers* and *scrubbers*, cattle that have run wild and deteriorated in condition⁶; *scrub cocky*, a small farmer working rough scrubland; *scrub-dashing*, riding through bush or scrub, especially after strayed cattle; *scrubdom*, land covered by scrub or the back country in general; *scrub-falling*, the clearing of scrub-covered land; *scrub-itch*, a skin disease found in New Guinea jungles; *scrub-rider*, a horseman who rides through scrub.

2.—DWELLINGS

It was an accident of environment that gave Australia the name *wattle* to describe the genus of plants known as *acacia*.⁷ Early settlers found it necessary to build shelters against the weather. They had learned how to build *wattle-and-dab huts* in the English provinces with long pliant twigs plastered over with mud. There were plenty of such twigs in Australia. So, from the wattle-and-dab method, the twig or *wattle* gave its name to the plant. *Wattle Day* is a national festival held on 1 August or 1 September each year, according to the wattle-flowering peak in each State.

Just as the New Zealanders took *whare* from the Maoris and put it into colloquial speech to describe a small hut or cottage, so we have taken the words *wurley*, *gunyah*, *goondie*, *mia mia* and *humpy* from the aboriginals and used them for huts or shelters. Best known is *humpy*, which has been in popular speech for nearly a century. Morris says that the native word is *oompi* and that "the initial *h* is a Cockney addition"; he also points out that the old convict settlement in Moreton Bay (Queensland) was called Humpy Bong, i.e. *Oompi Bong*, a dead or deserted settlement.

The *breakweather*, *breakwind*, *badger box* and *V hut* are additional Australasian terms for various kinds of shelters.

⁵ The "Oxford Dictionary" definition.

⁶ Both *scrubbes* and *scrubs* were used in sixteenth-century English to describe a weedy type of cattle. A

mean or insignificant fellow was called a *scrub* in English dialect.

⁷ More than 500 species of *acacia* are indigenous to this country.

The use of *slab* for a hewn plank is also Australian. So are *jockeys*, *jockey sticks* and *riders* for a framework used to hold the roof of a bush hut in place. Strictly speaking, *riders* are slabs or logs running from the ridge of the roof to the eaves, and *jockeys* are logs laid horizontally across the riders at their lower ends.

From the employment of shingles or wooden tiles in hut-building, the Australian has developed several useful expressions, among them *to have a shingle short* (1847), *short of a sheet of bark* (1885) and *short of a sheet* (1891), all implying that a person has "a tile loose" or is silly. The simple word *short* is also used without elaboration. "That fellow's a bit *short*", we say, meaning he's stupid, or out of his mind.

3.—AXEMEN

Of words inherited from Australian axemen and their craft the following are most worthy of mention: *kelly* and *douglas*, an axe (from the names of makers), with their derivatives *to swing kelly* or *douglas*, to do axework; *tommy axe*, a variant of tomahawk; *springboard* or *board*, the short plank between three and four feet long on which an axeman stands in chopping a tree above ordinary shoulder height from the ground; the *toe* and *shoe* of a springboard which keep it in position while the axeman works; *splitter*, a timber cutter (1841) and *split stuff*, timber sawn into lengths and then split (1852); *jinker* and *junker*, a bush contrivance, consisting of two pairs of wheels, having their axle trees joined by a long beam, under which tree trunks are suspended by chains and transported (from the Scottish dialectal *jancker*); *stoving*, the burning off of stumps; and *driving*, a method of tree-felling in hilly country. In the *drive system* a large group of trees on the slope of a hill is partly cut through and left standing; a *drive tree* at the top of the hill is then felled and the trees topple on to one another.

4.—OUTBACK FOODS

Owing largely to the influence of the bushman and the swagman a considerable vocabulary has grown around our foods, especially around those staples of outback diet, mutton and damper.

As a generic title for food of any description *tucker* has been in Australian use since 1852—it comes from the English dialectal *tuck*, food or appetite—and we have put it to sundry important

uses in *tuckerbag*, *tuckerbasket*, *tuckerbill*, *tuckerbox*,⁸ *tucker-time*, *tuckerless* and *to tucker* (to feed).

Outback cooks have been known by many names (since most outback cooks are men, these names have had revivals among our fighting men in time of war), the most common of which are: *bab*, *babbler*, *babbler's offsider*, *babblins*, *baitlayer*, *doctor*, *blacksmith*, *poisoner* and *crippen*. Partridge claims *babbler* (a clipped form taken from the rhyming slang, *babbling brook*, a cook) as English military slang, but it was in Australian currency in 1906 before the English got hold of it. Crippen, of course, was an English murderer. A term of somewhat doubtful origin is *Sally Thompson* as applied to a shearer's cook. A correspondent says that this was once "a common appellation". It may be noted that Thompsons have frequently been nicknamed *Sally* in the British Army, in the way that Clarks are nicknamed *Nobby*.

Because they were natural developments, *kangaroo steak*, *kangaroo tail soup*, *cockatoo pie* and *cockatoo soup* need no comment; but some explanation is obviously needed when we are confronted with *Gundaroo bullock* and *Grabben Gullen pie*, since only old bushmen could clear the fog of time away from these expressions. They were mainly localized in use, both *Gundaroo* and *Grabben Gullen* being N.S.W. townships. The term *Gundaroo bullock* was used in the 1890s to describe a dish of native bear or koala meat; *Grabben Gullen pie* was a pumpkin scooped out and stuffed with possum meat and then baked. *Dunlop*, mutton, also requires elucidation. It commemorates the name of one of the largest stations on the Darling River where, according to the "Bulletin" of 7 August 1897, "the owners gave liberal quantities of mutton to travellers". *Burdekin duck* is a North Queensland name for a dish of sliced beef fried in batter.

Steamer was a dish of stewed kangaroo flavoured with pork (1820) *stick-up meat*, meat roasted over a bush fire on a spit of wood that rested on two pronged sticks (1830), and *station jack*, a meat pudding made with flour, water and chopped beef (1853).

Colonial goose and *colonial duck* have been established Australian dishes for more than fifty years. The former is a boned leg of mutton stuffed with sage and onions; the latter is a boned shoulder of mutton treated in the same fashion.

⁸ Jack Moses's poem, "Nine Miles from Gundagai", which includes the lines, "And the dog sits on the

tuckerbox / Nine miles from Gundagai", has made this expression widely known.

It was what W. W. Dobie⁹ called the *muttonous* diet of the outback that produced the expression *the Old Thing* for a meal of mutton and damper. It dates from 1848. *Ram-struck mutton*, tough meat; *concertina*, a side of mutton; *banjo*, a shoulder of mutton (also used for a frying pan); *stag and brownie*, a meal of mutton and brownie—these are poured from the same lingual vat. Perhaps we could also add *underground mutton* for rabbit flesh.

For sausages we can offer a selection of terms—*snags*, *snaggles*, *snorks*, *snorkers* and *bangers*—and for saveloys one simple expressive word, *starvers*.

The *damper* is a foundation of bush eating in more ways than one. Strictly speaking it is bread baked in ashes. The mistake has often been made of calling it “unleavened”. Although yeast could not usually be used under bush conditions, the flour was often made to rise with baking powder, or with a judicious mixture of bicarbonate of soda and cream of tartar or tartaric acid, which was easily obtainable. Eno’s Fruit Salts gives better results as baking powder than soda and cream of tartar, because its proportions are correct, but it was too expensive for use in the great damper-cooking days. The first Australian record of the term is in 1826, and once again it proves to be an adaptation of an older English use. In English the word *damper* is given as a snack between meals or a wet blanket—both of which might be applied to the products of some damper-cookers. In “Our Antipodes” Mundy observes that they are “a damper sure enough to the stoutest appetite”.

The damper has many culinary offspring. Small dampers cooked on the ashes (instead of in them) variously rejoice in the names *beggars-on-the-coals*, *buggers-on-the-coals* and *devils-on-the-coals*. The *johnny cake* is somewhat similar, but those who link this with the American *journey cake* are astray, for the ingredients are widely different. Then there is the *brownie*, *fattie* and *tommy*, all mixed in the same way as the damper with the addition of sugar, currants and fat. The *whitey* is a brownie cooked without fat; the *baking powder brownie* is a brownie made with baking powder; and a *blade brownie* is one made with yeast instead of baking powder. A *fat cake* is a piece of fried dough (1865); a *flooper in the pan*, “that bush luxury . . . which is a sort of greasy pudding” (1840)¹⁰; *dips* were knobs of dough

⁹ “Recollections of a Visit to Port Phillip” (1856).

dated 16 November 1840, quoted in “Life in the Bush” by F. J. Meyrick (1939).

¹⁰ The quotation is from a letter

rick (1939).

dropped into boiling water (1859); *leatherjacket* was the name given to a mixture of flour and water that was either fried or cooked on red-hot embers (1846); and *pufftaloonas*¹¹ are hot fried cakes, spread with jam, sugar or honey.

For good measure, here is a group of slang terms for damper and similar foods: *dorkum*, *nightmare*, *sod* and *woppidown*, all used for dampers; *dog's jew's harps*, dumplings; and *death adders*, johnny cakes, which a writer in the "Bulletin" of 7 July 1897 said was a term that had been "introduced by city bushmen".

While the *bushmen's hot dinner*, a meal of damper and mustard (tramps' slang), the *bush dinner*, "mutton, damper and tea" (from 1852), the *duck's dinner*, water alone, and the *bullocky's breakfast*, a hitch in the belt and an attention to natural requirements, seem to have featured so often in outback life that they required comment, there is indeed little variety in outback diet, which is probably why we have inherited so many terms for what, after all, are practically the same things. Consider, for instance, these slang names for treacle and golden syrup: *long-tail*, *spare boy*, *Kidman's blood mixture*, *Kidman's joy*, *beetle bait*, *black jack*, *bullocky's joy*, *cocky's joy*,¹² and *tear-arse*.¹³ We are left to mourn that the bushman and his fellows did not have more items of food to work on with their imaginations.

For stews our only original contributions appear to be *hash-me-gandy* and *mulligan stew*. The former may be a play on *hash* (there is a version, *hash magandy*, in 1905), and the latter is probably a corruption of the U.S. tramps' slang *mulligan*, a stew, influenced by the Australian *mulga*.

Two expressions related to the aboriginals are *lazybed cooking*, the native method of cooking in the hot ashes of campfires, and *jump-up*, a mixture of "flour and water boiled into a paste with sugar". In the latter case the bubbles which rose to the surface

¹¹ According to Mossman and Banister, "Australia Visited and Revisited" (1853), Americans gave the name *puff ballooners* to a kind of pancake. Mrs Aeneas Gunn, "We of the Never Never" (1907), uses *puff de looneys*. Eve Langley, "The Pea Pickers" (1942), renders it *pufftaloones*.

¹² To this "joy" series might be added *whaler's delight*—also known as *Murrumbidgee jam*—which is used

to describe brown sugar moistened with cold tea and spread on damper. The references in these terms are, of course, to the *Murrumbidgee whaler*. On a different tack, we find *digger's delight*, but the subject was not food. Recorded in 1891, this expression was used for a large felt hat worn by New Zealand gum-diggers.

¹³ Used in English slang for cheese.

luring boiling were described by the aboriginals as *jump-up*. After 1859 several references are found to the dish.

Among aboriginal delicacies are birds known as galahs. There is a saying in the bush: "Put a stone in the pot and when it's soft the galahs are ready". But this is an exaggeration. Young galahs make as rich a dish as wild pigeons.

Here are a few general terms: *dust*, flour; *dynamite*, baking powder; *Murrumbidgee oyster*, a raw egg taken with vinegar, pepper and salt; *leprosy*, cabbage; *goog*, an egg (a word formed perhaps on the sense of *gog*, in *goosgog*, a gooseberry; U.S. slang has *googs*, spectacles—in all these cases roundness is implied¹⁴); *burgoo*, oatmeal and water taken to the woolshed or harvest field to be drunk during work (from the English nautical *burgoo*, porridge or oatmeal gruel); *dover*, provisions, food in general; *dodger*, bread (which dates from before 1897 in Australia, but was anticipated by the U.S. use of the term for a hard-boiled cake or biscuit, usually called a *corn-dodger*)¹⁵; *to bite someone's name*, *to sign one's hand*, *to make food laugh*, to eat; and *banyan lay*, the name by which Friday was known in the bush a generation or so ago.

In their typescript of Australian slang, Stephens and O'Brien note: "Any day of starvation or short diet is also called a *banyan lay* [in the outback]. With boundary riders or out-station dwellers the last day of their weekly rations is so known." This expression also had English nautical origins. It meant a day on which sailors ate no flesh. Australia has had a long association with it. For instance, the note "No banyan days", meaning that meat would be supplied every day, is used twice in a Certificate of Victualling, dated 10 March 1796.¹⁶

As a concluding note on our eating habits, here is a glimpse of city life in a story told over the Australian radio by F. J. Mills¹⁷:

A man approached a piecart in the city the other night, just as the *pie-artist*¹⁸ was packing up and about to depart.

"Gimme a *torpedo* or a *time bomb*, please," he ordered.

"Sorry, mate, sold right out of both," replied the piecartist.

"Got any *hot islands*, then?" asked the customer.

"No, sold out, too," was the answer.

¹⁴ Whence, *full as a goog*, equivalent to *full as a tick*, drunk.

¹⁵ *Dodger* was also used for a sandwich in World War No. 1 and was taken into English army slang, according to Partridge.

¹⁶ In "Historical Records of New South Wales".

¹⁷ From A.B.C. station 5CL, 1 December 1940.

¹⁸ This useful noun seems to be Australian.

AUSTRAL ENGLISH
A DICTIONARY OF
AUSTRALASIAN WORDS
PHRASES AND USAGES

WITH THOSE ABORIGINAL-AUSTRALIAN AND MAORI WORDS WHICH
HAVE BECOME INCORPORATED IN THE LANGUAGE AND THE
COMMONER SCIENTIFIC WORDS THAT HAVE HAD
THEIR ORIGIN IN AUSTRALASIA

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1898

MORRIS'S AUSTRAL ENGLISH

Best-known Australian dictionary published to date, but overloaded
with names of flora and fauna.

the heck have you got?" came back the other.
ried splinters with slabs and grease," was the reply.
I'll have 'em," said the customer.

uninitiated it may be explained that *torpedoes* and *time bombs* s and pies; *hot islands* are hot potatoes in gravy; and *splinters in labs and grease* are potato chips with bread and butter.

ght be expected in an enthusiastic tea-drinking country ours we have developed a useful vocabulary around this . Two old expressions are *post-and-rails* (also called *tr-rail tea*) and *jack the painter*, the former derived from es of stalk and leaf floating on top, and the latter from t left round the drinker's mouth or in the billy (at least, he approved explanation).

Billy is the focal point round which all good tea-drinking gyrate. It is as intimately Australian as the *sundowners*, *overlanders* and *bushmen* who have walked it millions

The *billy* is something more than a tin in which water ; it is used extensively for cooking in the bush, especially ing vegetables and for stewing. Owing, perhaps, to the e of tea-packers who named their product *Billy Tea* this often forgotten, but, even so, it can scarcely excuse the

"Dictionary" for defining *billy* as "the Australian bush-pot".

origin of *billy* is by no means as obscure as Morris and ould make it. It is academic nonsense to seek an origin 'rench *bouilli*. The source is the aboriginal word *billa*, a river, by transference to water. *Billa* makes its appear- another well-known Australian term, *billabong* which, as ns—*billa*, a creek, and *bong*, to die—show, is a portion of hat is no longer running.¹⁹

ban and *billypot* are self-explanatory derivatives.

*Black jack*²⁰ is also a billy, often used as a synonym for ot. The history of *quart pot* dates from 1844; *billy* was d in print until 1850. *Jackshea* or *Jack Shay* are other es for a quart pot; to these, *pint pot* may be added with- lanation.

dict definition is: "A quasi- r bend, lacking effluence at r end due to siltation, but confluence at the lower hich it fills." Many *billa-* : seasonal in formation, oc- nly at flood times when a rflows its banks.

²⁰ *Black jack* is also a slang term for treacle, by transference from the billy of that name. (treacle tins were ideal for the purpose). The term was used in English for a leather drinking vessel.

Tea is said to be *bulled* when soda is added to make it stronger. This use of the verb is closely allied to *bull*, meaning to add to the strength of a mining blast by packing more dynamite at the base of a bore than along the bore itself. From the 1890s came another use of *bull*, to add cold water to tea or spirits to dilute it, which scarcely seems in harmony with the above definitions. However, the English slang use of *bull*, for a teapot with the leaves left in for a second brew, should be noted. Little is to be gained by attempting to unravel this conflict in meanings, since both had currency in former days.

Cuppa is a national expression for a cup of tea; *to take tea with a person*, to associate with someone, dates from 1881; *easy as tea drinking*, extremely simple, was used by an Australian writer in 1893; and *come-love tea* is a weak brew, especially one made with used leaves.²¹

5.—BUSH IDIOM

In this section we come to one of the most important and colourful parts of the Australian language—the multitude of phrases and idiomatic expressions that have grown up in the outback. Once again we cannot say that these phrases are purely bush idiom. They have extended far beyond the boundaries of the bush, no matter how wide a meaning we give to that term. Many of them will be heard as often in a capital as in the outback. But there is a tang about them, an atmosphere to make you feel that their true background is not to be found in anonymous city streets, but in the individual worlds which men have carved for themselves out of the bush and backblocks.

This section should be of special interest to writers, for they possess the power to show that our idiom extends far beyond the limitations of *stone the crows!* and *strike me up a gum-tree!* which are regarded by too many people as our sole contributions to the world of colourful speech.

Although it is a lengthy quotation, it is impossible to pass by this commentary on bush lingo by John Drayman published in the "Bulletin" of 11 November 1899:

Some of our bush phrases were transplanted from America, probably per the California digger and Yankee whaler of half a century ago; but in transplantation have become so Australianised that their own coiners would not recognise them.

²¹ In the "Woman's Mirror", 3 December 1940, a writer declared that it comes from: "Come love, sit on my knee; you're too weak to stand."

Among others, our *hills too steep for a crow to fly down without breeching* is akin to the Yankee *hills so steep that chain lightning couldn't go down 'em 'thout putting the shoe [brake] on*.

J. R. Lowell claims old-world origins for nearly all Yankee words, but holds that most of his countrymen's quaint phrases are native. Some day, soon, we will be in a position to make the same claim to originality.

Of course, the Australian's quickness to adapt old similes to local requirements will always make it difficult satisfactorily to draft our *quandongs*²² from Yankee nutmegs. Also, the similarity of our surroundings with those of early American folk—big distances, big trees, lack of history, log huts, bullock teams, the solemn stern fight with unkindly Nature, the common language—will certainly produce a similarity of phrase and (barring that tired feeling) even character, which will be scarcely distinguishable from plagiarism.

However, surely the bulk of the following—many of them in common use and all heard in the bush—are genuine *kanaroos*²³:

A man so short that to mount his horse he had to stand on his head to get his foot in the stirrup.

A sheep described by a shearer as having enough leather [loose skin] about his neck to make, say, dewlaps for a team of bullocks.

Another sheep described as having as many wrinkles in his hide as a concertina, or wrinkled from breech²⁴ to breakfast time, or from afternoon to appetite, meaning in sailor's parlance from stem to stern; but the Australian bushman generally puts his saying stern first . . .

A snake longer than anyone can remember.

A long journey to an indefinite goal—a thousand miles the other side of sundown.²⁵

An aperture so small and tight that you couldn't drive a tin tack in with a ton monkey.

Blankets so worn and devoid of nap that they wouldn't catch a burr if you dragged them from Bendigo to Bourke. Anyone too slow to catch worms, or to catch a cold, or to go to his own funeral, or to get out of his own road.

. . . The average Australian has no better standard of speed than he's pretty sudden or swift or he can run (or jump) like a blanky kangaroo with a pot of horse blister stuck to his tail.

From jackass to jackass is sometimes varied with from jackass to mopoke—from dawn to dark.

There are thousands of mere exaggerations used:

Hands like feet and feet like No. 4 shovels; head like a woolshed; mouth like a horse-collar, etc., but the comparisons are seldom incongruous or quaint enough to raise a smile.

Poverty of simile accounts for a lot of blanky [i.e. bloody] in the bush. The hottest day is only spoken of as hotter than blanky hell with the blanky lid off or as hot as the blanky hobs of hell.

Next to blanky, hell is the word most used by our natives. They run,

²² The fleshy fruit of the quandong-tree here used as a synecdoche.

²⁴ A euphemism for a more authentic use.

²³ This is another good example of localized synecdoche.

²⁵ See other colourful expressions of this type in Chapter III, section 2.

jump, swear, ride, fight, shear, skite and lie *like hell*, and the cook can even cook like hell. . . .

A round-barrelled horse is often *ribbed up like a mosquito*; a round-barrelled man is generally *ribbed up to the neck like a mosquito*.

A horse with good staying power has *a bottom like a camp oven*. So has a good fighting man; but the latter is generally *overloaded with science* as an additional reason for *taking to water* or fighting shy of a go with him.

[A sundowner's] tucker bags not seldom have *necks on 'em like blanky emus*. A dirty careless mate is slyly referred to as *a real clean bloke: he washes himself every six weeks whether he wants it or not, or he gets up at nine o'clock every morning, daylight or starlight*.

The wittiest bush similes are unprintable in a polite paper, but, my colonial! aren't they expressive and original!

Drayman's summary gives us a fair picture of bush idiom half a century ago, but it omits a great deal, doubtless because the writer was not sure how far he could go without encroaching on Americanisms. Moreover, he made little call on flora and fauna which, in every country, fall early victims to simile and metaphor.

Consider this quotation from the Sydney "Mirror" of 19 June 1942: "He need be no more filled with a passion for active soldiering *than a peeved paddymelon*." This from the Sydney "Telegraph" of 7 August 1943: "This is an open season for the racketeer. He's *as safe as a koala in a reserve*." And these from Sydney "Truth" (11 July, 1943): "Grey was *as aggressive as a bull ant*" and (12 September 1943): "Cast Well hadn't *as much whiz in him as a sick sheep*."

There are many comparable strokes of simile tucked away in odd corners of our language. Take, for example, the bandicoot,²⁶ and see what we have done to it: *balmy* (or *barmey*) *as a bandicoot*, *lousy as a bandicoot*, *miserable as a bandicoot*, *poor as a bandicoot*, *not the brains of a bandicoot*, *bald as a bandicoot*, *bandy as a bandicoot*. In his excellent "Capricornia" (1938) Xavier Herbert treats us to "fleeing like bandicoots before a bush fire". Sir Henry Parkes once found apt simile when he described a lonely and forlorn opponent as being *like a bandicoot on a burnt ridge*.²⁷

Many of these phrases are, of course, gross libels on one of

²⁶ J. I. Hunt ("Hunt's Book of Bonanzas", 1889) refers to "This ole pumpkin-headed *bandicoot* ov a pos'man". To *bandicoot* is to take tuberous vegetables, especially potatoes, out of soil, but to leave the tops standing. This is done by bur-

rowing under the plant. Whence, *bandicooter*, one who steals vegetables in such a way, and *bandicooting*, the practice.

²⁷ Rendered *miserable as an orphan bandicoot on a burnt ridge* in the "Bulletin" of 24 March 1904.

the most sagacious little marsupials in the world, but they are none the less effective for that. They are sufficient to show that we have come a long way since days when the only Australian contribution to the world of fun and laughter was the riddle²⁸: Why is a dun like a platypus?—Because he is a beast with a bill.

This trite pun found its way into Farmer and Henley's "Dictionary of Slang" (1905) under the entry: "*Ornithorhynchus*. A creditor, a beast with a bill." It is repeated by Partridge who plunges deeper into the morass by saying it was current in Australia between *circa* 1895 and 1915, but produces no evidence to support his contention.

Here are a few more similes snatched from our environment: *mad as a goanna*, *mad as a gum-tree full of galahs*, *mad as a cut snake*, *mad as a beetle* (the similes *mad as a dingbat* or a *Chinaman* or a *two-bob watch* are also worth noting); *silly as a curlew*; *game as a piss ant* or *drunk as a piss ant* (we have taken a verb from this term: someone is *pissanting around* when he is messing about, and we *pissant*²⁹ someone when we defeat or outwit him); *to wriggle like a cut snake*, often used figuratively; *flat out like a lizard drinking*; *like a possum up a gum-tree* (the gum-tree is the only Australian part of this phrase); *black as a burnt log*; *thin as a fence-rail*; *teeth like a dog-leg fence*; *poor as a fowl*; *happy as a boxing kangaroo in fogtime*; *tough as fencing wire*; *as free from sense as a frog from feathers*; *to feel as though one might give birth to bull-ants* (or a litter of rattlesnakes); *rough as a pig's breakfast* or *rough as bags* (also rendered *rough as a bag* and *rough as a sandbag*); *sick as a blackfellow's dog*; *to sit up like Jackey*, to sit up straight, as an aboriginal is supposed to do in white company; and such examples as these used by sundry writers—*running like a wallaby with the dogs in full pursuit*,³⁰ *a boy as active and tough as a wallaroo*,³¹ *a face gnarled like the crinkles in a mulga root*,³² *clouds with the colours of a galah's wings*,³³ *men screaming like wounded brumbies*, cigarettes so large that *a wombat could have crawled into them*, and *black cockatoos like flying aborigines*.³⁴

²⁸ Noted by William Shaw, "The Land of Promise" (1854).

²⁹ *Pissball* is probably a more widely used verb in this sense.

³⁰ From the "Bulletin Story Book" (1901), p. 32.

³¹ Bernard O'Reilly, "Green Mountains" (1940), p. 47.

³² Ion L. Idriess, "The Great Boomerang" (1941), p. 13.

³³ Kylie Tennant, "The Battlers" (1941), p. 190.

³⁴ These three similes are used by Eve Langley in "The Pea Pickers" (1942).

Here we have a good cross-section of the material at our disposal, from the simple easy-flowing idiom that crystallizes naturally in a new country to the form of literary idiom that requires to be conscious of itself before it becomes solidified, but loses nothing because it is used deliberately. Not all of it is good, of course, not all of it has much significance, but then most idiom or slang verges on paltriness when taken from its context.

When we discover such glimpses of colourful speech as "I've tasted better stuff in a *billabong full of dead wallaroos*" (used by S. W. Keough, "Around the Army", 1943), "A Labor College has been founded in Sydney to remove the *bowyangs* from the minds of the workers" (from the "Sunday Telegraph", 13 February 1944), and "The bright river of reminiscence *ran a banker*" (used by Jim Donald in Sydney "Mirror", 10 January, 1944), we begin to feel that our language is being put to good use.

Contrary to popular belief, Henry Lawson made few original contributions to Australian idiom, although he used Australian slang liberally. In nine books of short stories published between 1896 and 1910, Lawson used only a dozen Australian similes, and some of these were not original. His own inventions were colourless and were, like much of his work, the product of a reporter rather than of an interpretive writer. The best of Lawson's similes (and some of these may not be his own) are: *a thirst like a sunstruck bone*, (a person) *squinting round like a great goanna*, *cold and dark as a bushman's grave*, (a horse) *came curvin' up like a boomerang*, *meaner than a goldfield Chinaman*.

Of additional similes peculiarly our own, the following are among the best: *game as a pebble* or *game as Ned Kelly* (a *pebble* is a person, especially a larrikin, or an animal hard to control, and Ned Kelly³⁵ was the last of our notable bush-rangers); *happy as larry*, extremely happy; *like a Ballarat jew-shop*, in a confusion; *all behind like Barney's bull*, delayed, backward (a play on the word *behind*, although the expression is probably as alliterative as it is biological); *to feel like a box of birds*, to feel happy or "chirpy"; *stiff as a crutch*, penniless; *cold enough to freeze the tail (nose, etc.) off a brass monkey*, extremely cold; *tea as weak as gin's p—s*, very weak tea (*maids-water* is used similarly); *to go through something* (or someone)

³⁵ *Ned Kelly* is displacing *one-armed bandit* for a poker machine and is also used as a synonym for

a Deadwood Dick type of story. *Kelly rules* means no rules at all.

like a *packet of salts*, to perform a task swiftly, to defeat a person soundly.

The gum-tree has found its way into Australian popular speech in numerous instances. In 1859 Oline Keese ("The Broad Arrow") referred to an Australian-born boy who used the synecdoche: "I'm a *gum-tree!*", meaning that he was a native of this country. *Gumsucker* was an old nickname by which Victorians were known (it was used a quarter of a century before Victoria became a state); later it was applied to Tasmanians and Queenslanders, thence to Australians as a whole. *To fix the old gum-tree*, to settle down; *to have gum-leaves growing out of one's ears*, to be a country bumpkin; *up a gum-tree*, in a quandary (a variant is *up a wattle*); *to have seen one's last gum-tree*, to be on the verge of death; and the exclamation *by gums!* (a simple extension of the mild English oath *by gum!*)—all these have found their way into our speech by the same route.

To have kangaroos in one's top paddock and *to have the white ants*, to be silly or mad; *a bit of a lyrebird*, said of a prevaricator; *to have a crow's eye*, to be cunning or sly; *to have crossed too many dry gullies*, or *to have been up too many hard stumps*, to have had too much experience of life to be gulled; *out where the bull feeds* or *where the pelican builds her nest*, in the outback; *reared with the brolgas and born in a drought*,³⁶ said of a toughened outback man; *to go up a hollow log*, to hide; *to do a perish*, almost to die for want of a drink, and sometimes for lack of food (whence, a *perishing track*, a journey where no water is to be found); *to go and catch a horse*, or *kill a snake*, to see a man about a dog; *to go through without the waterbag*, to be in a great hurry; *to sit down on a hole*, to camp by a waterhole; *herring-boning the Darling on Jackie Dow's mutton*, used of a wanderer who lives on the country (probably first applied to men of the *Murrumbidgee whaler* type); *the old square days* and *the earlies*, old times; *before the yeast bread* and *before the walnut*, used of early times; *not to care if the cow calves or breaks her neck*, to be indifferent to events; *to find one's home paddock*, to settle down after much travelling; *to ring one's tail*, to be cowardly (the terms *ringtail* and *possum-guts* for a coward show that the origin is the possum); *to get hold of the wrong end of the stick*, to be misinformed; *home and dried*, *home and hosed* and *home on the pig's back*, said when a

³⁶ The brolga is the Australian crane or native companion, *Megalornis rubicundus*.

task is properly and easily completed—the variety and colour of these phrases, which come from all parts of the Commonwealth, are sufficient to show that our outback has been rich in its idiomatic contributions.

From the shearer we have inherited *to look for one's swag straps* and *to roll one's pannikin to another shed*, to leave a job, and *the July fog*, the dead season when no shearing is done. From the bushman, living in continual dread of summer bush-fires, have come *the red mare* and *the red steer* for such fires. From the tramp, *there's a bug in the billy*, there's still something left, we're not hard up yet. And from countrymen in general, *ironbark*, unyielding; *to keep a dog and bark oneself*, which needs no explanation; *no flies about*, wide awake, alert; a person's *muttons*, the thing that is desired³⁷; *blow-in*, a new-comer, a person of brief residence in a locality; *bushman's squat*, a method of balancing on the balls of the feet with knees under the arms; and *bushman's cocktail*, a dry gin.³⁸

No good to Gundy, an elaboration of the simple "no good", has been current since 1907 or before, and probably had its origin in America. There is a township in New South Wales named Gundy and attempts have been made to link the phrase with this place. The origin is more likely to be found, however, in the old U.S. phrase, *according to Gunter*. Gunter was a noted mathematician who gave his name to works of precision and accuracy.

An expression used in north Australia which requires a note of explanation is *had it*. Anything can be said to have *had it*: food after it has been eaten has *had it*; a dead sheep has *had it*; a book that has been read has *had it*. It is one of those utility expressions almost defying definition.

In later chapters, as we reach into city life, numerous phrases will make their appearance. Here is a group of examples which fall midway between bush and city idiom and should be included in this section: *up against someone's duckhouse* (or *fowlhouse*), causing annoyance to a person (whence comes the verb *to duckhouse* someone, to cause him annoyance or to outwit him); *don't do anything you couldn't eat*, an Australian version of "Don't bite off more than you can chew"; *not to be able to fight one's way out of a paper bag*, to be a weakling; *he (you, etc.) couldn't*

³⁷ Almost certainly, although remotely, from the French, *revenons à nos moutons*, let us return to our subject. In "National Education" (N.Z.), 1 February 1940, an example

appears: "Milk is small Charlie's muttons."

³⁸ This, of course, is a play on *gin*, an aboriginal female, and the liquor.

do it in the time! an answer to someone who threatens hostilities; *on the sheep's back*, often said of Australia, because of her dependence on the sheep industry; *to mind one's own pigeon* (or *pidgin*), to mind one's own business; *fair into one's tomahawk, barrel, or barrow*, just what one desires; *to put the leg rope on a person*, to discipline him or her; *to have death added in one's pocket*, to be mean with money.

By now it should have become obvious that Australian idiom is far above the *stone the crows!* class of phrase; but to underline the fact, here are some well-established variations on the theme to show that we have not been idle even in simple matters: *starve the lizards!* *starve the mopokes!* *starve the wombats!* *starve the bardies!* (a Westralian version) and even *starve the rats!* (recorded in the "Bulletin", 9 January 1908), *speed the wombats!* *stiffen the lizards!* *stiffen the snakes!* and *stiffen the wombats!*

CHAPTER V

THE ROAD

1.—GOLD

THE road has always been more a symbol than an exact term in Australia. The word "road" gives you some impression of a highway or a well-beaten thoroughfare leading definitely from one place to another. But the road countless Australians have travelled has been anything but well-beaten; at the best it has often been only a track leading vaguely from some place over the horizon into the wilderness, and it has been simpler to strike off on your own than to follow the footsteps of others.

Of wanderers there were plenty in the first sixty years of Australian history: these were the men who pushed back the boundaries of settlement into the ranges along the eastern seaboard, then into the plainlands and mallee, into the wild bush and the sandy desert, men who, by the turn of 1850, had begun to dig down their roots in far outback stations with the feeling that their journeyings were over and that they could reap some rewards for perilous adventure.

But the turn of the mid-century was to bring a new spirit of wanderlust to Australia, was to set moving the feet of countless thousands, to bring heartbreak and chagrin for some, wealth for others. With 1851 came the discovery of gold.

It has for long been a cliché that this country achieved nationhood during World War No. 1, but in many respects she achieved that nationhood in the 1850s. Lingually, at any rate, she acquired an identity of her own in gold-rush days from which she has never looked back.

No longer was it necessary for men to toil wearily against nature, against heat and drought and flies and loneliness, against the stupidity of cattle and sheep, in order to make a livelihood. Here, on the goldfields, was wealth: great chunks of raw gold, gold that you could kick out of the surface with the toe of your

boot, gold that you could take out of a creek-bed in handfuls, gold that you could find in dusty town streets.

So the trek began and the tracks were beaten with the passing of many feet.

From all parts of the world people poured into the country, hungry for easy money. Population jumped from 400,000 in 1850 to nearly 1,200,000 ten years later. Most of this increase was due to gold.

But gold brought poverty as well as prosperity, and with that poverty came the language of tramps and deadbeats; it gave us the beginnings of underworld cant, the argot of pubs and our early larrikins; it meant—and this is the great importance of that symbol, The Road—the establishment of a kinship between city dwellers and people of the backblocks.

In 1853 a writer named C. R. Read urged that Englishmen going to the Australian diggings should search their souls and ask themselves “if they can stand a little colonial slang”. It should be obvious by now that the adjective “little” was more than conservative. Records of Australian life after 1851 are fertile in slang.

No term bulks more significantly in this period than *digger*, with its many derivatives, *diggerman* (1854), *diggeress*, the wife of a miner (1855), *diggerdom* (1855) and *diggerism* (1857). *Digger* had been recorded in Australia before 1850, but it was not until 1851 that it came into prominence as gold *broke out* first in New South Wales and then in the newly created state of Victoria, bringing in its train scores of expressions concocted to meet the needs of the times. *Diggings* had been in English use in 1769 and it came to this country via America. An old and now obsolete Australian version (which is found in many old books) was *diggins*; a rare singular form *diggin* was sometimes used.

Scarcely less important than the digger was the *fossicker* (1853), derived from the old English dialectal verb, *to fossick*, which found an easy place in our gold-seeking vocabulary. The verb has now a wide colloquial use: we *fossick for* something when we search for it, we *fossick it up*, or we *fossick around*.

Here are a few more names for those who *chased the nimble pennyweight* in one way or another: *reefer*,¹ *cradler*, *dryblower*

¹ *Quartz-reefer* is also Australian. So is *quartz boil*, an outcrop of a quartz reef on the surface (R. B.

Smyth, “The Gold Fields and Mineral Districts of Victoria”, 1869).

or *blower*, *specker*, *sandscratcher* and *nuggeter*. *Nugget* is an Austral-American term for a piece of gold (the early textual quotations in the "Oxford Dictionary" are Australian), and *plug*, *specimen*, *slug*, *cake*, *fly-spot* and *fly-s*—*t* also seem to be indigenous. *Colour* for gold or specks of gold is recorded in this country in 1857 and in America slightly earlier. We shall have to class it—with many other gold-mining expressions—as a common possession. Of 1857 vintage also we find *raise the colour* and *get the colour*, to strike gold.

The uses of the verb, to *bottom*, to reach solid rock or clay in a gold-mine (1852), or to reach earth which contains gold in a mine (1857), are particularized Australian versions of the standard English; *to bottom on to* (or *on the*) *gold*, to strike luck, to succeed, is indigenous.

The use of *show* for a mine (later to become the equivalent of a chance or opportunity, as in *give him a show*, let him have a chance to do his best) is another expression of our own; but *to prospect*, *pan out* and *pan off* seem to be American originals.

According to the "Oxford Dictionary" we are entitled to claim as our own *prospect*, for "an examination or test of mineral richness in a locality or of material from which ore, etc., is to be extracted", but *prospector*, *prospecting* and kindred terms were used earlier in the U.S.

Leader, an alluvial gold claim or a vein of gold; *deep leader*, a man who works a deep alluvial claim; *Gympie*² *work*, single-handed hammer and drill work (a Queensland use); *wash* and *washing stuff*, alluvial soil from which gold is extracted by washing; *reef*, a lode of auriferous quartz; *blow*, a mineral outcrop; *monkey shaft*, a small trial shaft in a mine; *leg*, a nearly vertical prolongation of the saddle of a quartz reef; *lead*, an alluvial gold deposit on the bed of an ancient river; *burnt stuff*, a stratum of iron-hard rock or compacted clay and rock encountered during digging; and *hungry quartz*, an unpromising quartz reef—these are all terms of long history belonging to the Australian miner's vocabulary.

Dart, earth or deposits "worth washing for gold as distinguished from that considered worthless" (1859), *fine carrots*, a miner's solecism for "carats fine" (1857), *mullock*, unwanted spoil or rock from a mine³ (1864), and *miner's right*, a licence to dig for

² "The single-hand or *Gympie hammer* was also called a *Massey hammer*," states a correspondent. *work shoddily*; *to poke mullock* (also *muck*) *at*, an extension of *poke borak at*, to make fun of a person.

³ Whence, *to mullock over*, to

gold, are a few more of the long-established terms to which we may make claim.

Mention of the miner's right recalls an important phase in our life dear to every Australian democrat's heart. In 1852 a local act was passed in Victoria imposing payment of a licence fee on all diggers (originally £18 a year, later £12 a year). This licence fee and the manner in which it was officially enforced led to the stand by the miners at Eureka Stockade in 1854. As was to be expected, events which moved close to the miners' lives erupted in numerous expressions which, although obsolete now, are worthy of a place in our memory.

In 1851 C. J. Latrobe, an ardent champion of law and order, was appointed Governor of Victoria. His administration bred riots at Beechworth and Castlemaine, for it was under his guidance that *licence-hunting* or *digger-hunting*,⁴ as the practice was called, was instituted to see that every miner had his licence.

Latrobe bequeathed to the miners' language the simple word *Joe!* (his Christian name was Joseph) which often makes its appearance in records of gold-mining days.

Joe! and the additional forms *Joe-Joe!* or *Joey!* were cries of warning used by diggers at the approach of police. T. McCombie writes in his "Australian Sketches" (1861): "To *joey* or *joe* a person on the diggings, or anywhere else in Australia, is grossly to insult and ridicule him."

Two years later B. A. Heywood added that the term was becoming "the chaff for new chums", and was being hurled at new arrivals on the goldfields. By the 1860s it had found its way to New Zealand and, even as late as 1871, C. L. Money reports in "Knocking About New Zealand": "The word *joe* expresses the derision usually bestowed on new chums on the diggings."⁵

It was a natural development that police troopers should come to be called *joes* (incidentally, *trooper*, for a mounted man, and *black-trooper*, are both Australianisms), although this use is not found often, *demons* and *traps* (1853) being more widely used.

⁴The police ("largely recruited from Tasmania . . . many were ex-convicts who had risen to be goal-warders") were called *digger-hunters* and, in the parade of their authority, they were said to hold *licence hunts* or *licence meets*. A writer of 1857 informs us that *digger-hunting* in the days of Latrobe was "a fort-

nightly proceeding and never . . . at less than weekly intervals".

⁵Lyricist Charles R. Thatcher, "Colonial Minstrel" (1864), takes the term into verse: "We nail the ringleaders and though they shout Joe! / Straight off to the lock-up right onward they go." From "The Song of the Trap".

The Camp, which according to McCombie (*vide supra*) "used to be the terror of all", was a digger nickname for the section of a diggings which contained the police courts, the residence of the gold commissioners and the escort office. A *warden* was a government official, holding magisterial powers, in charge of a goldfield.

The police were not without their uses, however. Lack of tact in the way the miner's licence was enforced certainly caused conflict, but there were many illegal practices to be checked among the miners.

The *salting* and *peppering* of claims was widely prevalent. To *salt a claim* (1853) described the practice of "doping" or faking a worn-out or useless claim with gold dust to make it appear productive. One writer describes it as "the practice of burying gold in localities whither prospectors are attracted by rumours of ore having been found". *Planting* was a synonym.

Night-fossicking, the theft of gold at night from others' claims, and *shepherding*, "keeping passive possession of a hole and keeping watch around for the run of the *gutter* [i.e. the lead of gold]" were some of the problems with which law and order had to cope. To *shepherd*, to retain legal right to a claim by doing a minimum of work on it with the object of making a profit by sale, is recorded in 1856.

To *jump a claim*, generally accepted as U.S. slang, was current in America only three years before being used in print in this country in 1854.

Shicer (1857) and *duffer* (1861) are two of our oldest terms for unproductive gold-mines, although the principal use for the former today is for a swindler, crook or racecourse welsher. *Shyster*⁶ and *schiser*, spellings which were recorded before 1890, support the contention that the word is derived from the German vulgarism *Scheisser*.⁷

Yellow fever, the equivalent of the U.S. gold fever; *weight*, an abbreviation of pennyweight; *poor man's diggings*, alluvial gold deposits (i.e. gold which a poor man can work, contrasting with reef gold which requires capital to develop); *to make a rise*, to find gold; *specking* and *nuggeting*, which describe the practice of searching for surface gold especially after heavy rain (*surfacing* dates from 1858 or earlier)—all are expressions of a

⁶ Used in U.S. slang for an unprincipled lawyer.

⁷ The English dialectal form *shice*, no good, worthless, should be noted.

colloquial nature which the digger and his kind put into currency.

To *duffer out*, said of a mine which fails; *salt bush claim*, a worthless claim; *new chum gold*, iron pyrites, which is likely to mislead the uninitiated; *hatter*, a lonely miner, and *hatting*, his way of life (*bacher* and *baching* are also originally Australasian⁸); and *centrepede*, a ladder made of a single upright with cross-pieces nailed on at intervals, are also worthy of inclusion.

It should be noted that in mining parlance one is always "on" a field, not "at"; thus, a digger spoke of being *on Ballarat*, *on diggings* and *on the gold*.

In Chapter III, section 2, reference was made to the new uses to which Australia has put the word *paddock*. There was also a development in the mining sphere, a *paddock* being "an excavation made for procuring wash-dirt in shallow ground, or a place built near the mouth of a shaft where quartz or wash-dirt is stored". This use dates from 1863. It appears, after 1873, as a verb, *to paddock*, to store ore in a paddock and to excavate for the purpose of procuring wash-dirt in shallow alluvium.

In the 1890s Westralian mining shares and their dealers on the Stock Exchange earned the name *kangaroos*; penny stocks were termed *shypoo shares*, and the mines themselves *shypoo shows*. *Shypoo*, for cheap or unstable, seems to be of Westralian origin; it has also been used in that state for colonial beer and, as *shypoo joint*, for a beer house.

According to Anthony Trollope, the use of *verandah* for "a kind of open exchange . . . on the street pavement, apparently selected by chance, on which the dealers in mining shares congregate", was popular before 1873 in Melbourne, Sandhurst and Ballarat.

On the South Australian Exchange the terms *Nobs* and *Snobs* were current during the middle of last century. The *Nobs* were shareholders in the Princess Royal Company which was formed in 1841 to exploit copper reefs near Kapunda, some ninety miles from Adelaide. The *Snobs* were shareholders in the South Australian Mining Company, formed in the same year by merchants and tradesmen of Adelaide to exploit the same reefs. Ill-feeling was engendered by this competition, as much on the grounds of snobbishness as on those of finance.

⁸ *Bacher* is recorded in 1895, *baching* in 1896. In New Zealand the noun *bach* is used for a small hut or house. The U.S. employed the

verb *to bach*, to live alone, before we did. Another outback term for a person who lives alone is *poon*.

The Cornishman has been known in English slang as *Cousin Jan* or *Cousin Jacky* for nearly a century, according to Partridge. In Australia we have called Cornish miners *Cousin Jacks* since the 1880s. They have proved themselves expert tin miners.

Here is a brief glossary of tin miners' terms supplied to me by a correspondent:

banjo, a device in which tin is cleaned. It was originally a hole scooped out in the shape of a banjo and lined with bag. The dirt was placed in the large round portion of the banjo and water baled on to it by means of a *banjo scoop*. The modern *banjo* is usually a V-shaped box made of wood (see *V-box*).

banjo scoop, a kerosene tin with one side cut out, attached to a handle by means of wire, used in baling water into a banjo.

banjoing, a method of cleaning tin as described above.

bung, an obstruction in a reef.

cut, ground worked by a dredge at one site.

duffer, a shaft containing no payable dirt.

face, the depth of *wash* or dirt which bears tin.

feed-water, clean water needed for the feed tank of a boiler.

fossicker, a tin miner who works alone.

grizzly, as for *hopper-plate* (*q.v.*)

hide bucket, a bucket made of greenhide and used in shafts.

hopper-plate, a sieve arrangement at the head of the boxes for passing large stones through (whence, *hopperings*, the stones therefrom).

horse, as for *bung* (*q.v.*).

metal, used colloquially for tin.

muck-shoveller, a tin miner.

overburden, dirt stripped from top of the *wash*.

slide, a stout fork with uprights for holding a cask and with a swingle bar attached, used for carting water by horse power.

slurry, soupy water from boxes which settles into boggy clay.

tail-dump, a place where tailings are tipped from a sluice-box.

tom, timber used in a shaft.

V-box, a V-shaped box at the head of a sluice-box where wash-dirt is first dumped.

wash stones, water-worn stones present in dirt which bears tin.

whip, a method of drawing water or mullock, by hand or horse power.

willoughby, a machine for removing black sand (similar in appearance to tin) from tin. Said to be from the name of its original maker.

Opal-mining has also been developed extensively in Australia. Here is a number of expressions from the opal miners' vocabulary also sent to me by a correspondent:

colour, the flash of opal in potch (*q.v.*).

floaters, raddled opal found on the surface.

nobbies, matrix opal. *Nobby opal* is an acknowledged variety.

noodling, prospecting old opal dumps for what is left.

parcel, a find of opal. "Any fair haul of opal is always a 'parcel'!"

potch, opal silica, resembling delft.

shin-cracker, a subsoil of close-grained, brittle sandstone where the *potch* or silica runs.

2.—WANDERERS AND DEADBEATS

World War No. 2 served to bring home to Englishmen and Americans the fact that Australia had something of a national song in the melody "Waltzing Matilda". This discovery in its turn raised questions as to the origin of *waltzing matilda*, for humping a swag. As was to be expected, Australians had not worried their heads on the matter. If they had worried, they might have turned to Partridge's "Dictionary of Slang" and contented themselves with the quite erroneous explanation that it originated with the poem that Banjo Paterson wrote in the first decade of this century,⁹ to which music was subsequently composed.

The exact origin of the expression is impossible to establish. This much is clear, however: the first recorded version in Australia was not *waltzing matilda*, but *walking matilda*, and it was in popular use long before Paterson heard it.

In "Cobbers", Thomas Wood tells a story worth repeating:

Banjo Paterson used to come and stay with old Robert McPherson, out at Dagworth Station [Queensland], years ago. They were driving into Winton one day, in a buggy, along with McPherson's sister and Jack Lawton, the drover. He's told me the tale many a time. On the way they passed a man carrying his swag. "That's what we call *waltzing matilda* in these parts," said McPherson; and Banjo Paterson was so struck with the phrase that he got a piece of paper and wrote the verses there and then. When they got to Winton, his sister, who was a bit of a musician, wrote the tune; and they all sang it that night.

The first printed reference to the expression I have discovered is in an 1893 commentary by Henry Lawson on "Some Popular Australian Mistakes".¹⁰ In this he records both *matilda* as a slang term for a swag, and *walking matilda*. The next reference is a brief lament by the "Bulletin" of 12 December 1897, in its criticism of Morris's "Austral English", that the word *matilda* was not included in the dictionary. Shortly after this, on 20 August 1898, we find another writer in the "Bulletin" voicing regret that *waltzing matilda* was "now rarely heard".

⁹ The exact date when Paterson wrote the poem is unknown. It was published with his third collection,

"Salt-bush Bill, J.P.", in 1917, and was probably written after 1902.

¹⁰ In the "Bulletin", 18 November 1893.

The general impression one gets from these notes is that the expression was not widely known at the tail-end of last century, although it had probably been in use for ten years or so. Subsequent printed examples almost invariably avoid the *waltzing*. Thus, in 1898, we find reference to a man travelling *with matilda*; in 1909, an example of *humped matilda* and the sentence, "Jim . . . dropped along and let *matilda* down at the door"; in Jack Moses's book of poems "Nine Miles from Gundagai" (1938), occurs the example "where *matilda* roams the West".

Waltzing probably comes from American slang. In "Huckleberry Finn" (1884), Mark Twain used the verb *waltz*, to carry or transport, which is identical with the particularized Australianism. But as for *matilda*, we have little to help us. It may have been, as some people suggest, that the swagman regarded his swag, both from its shape and the fact that he slept with it, as a woman and christened it fancifully. Conclusive evidence is lacking. Until some watertight explanation is offered we will have to lay this problem away among the numerous enigmas that confront us in the Australian language.

Before we leave this expression, however, it might be pointed out that—with their inevitable knack of tampering with language—Australians have abbreviated it to *tilda*.

Of greater antiquity is *swag*, which dates from the beginning of last century. From its original English use to describe stolen booty, it had, by 1812 (the record is Vaux's), been extended to include "a bundle, parcel or package". In the tramp's vocabulary it signifies a rolled blanket within which are wrapped personal effects.

A writer in 1857 gave it the vague definition: "portable luggage that can be carried on the person".

Henry Lawson's detailed description—in "The Romance of the Swag" (1907)—both of the contents of a swag and how it should be rolled is probably the best of its kind. He says:

The swag is usually composed of a tent "fly" or strip of calico (a cover for the swag and a shelter in bad weather . . .), a couple of blankets, blue by custom and preference . . . and the core is composed of spare clothing and small personal effects.

As the great swag-rolling days are past, Lawson's careful analysis of the correct professional method is of considerable historical value.

Derived forms include *swagman* and the clippings, *swagger* and

swaggie. The form *swagsman* was also current for a period, but is now obsolete. *To swag it* and *swagging* date from 1861.

Since the end of last century *swagger* has lost currency in Australia, but is still well established in New Zealand. In 1933, however, a New Zealand observer wrote: "*Swaggers* almost disappeared [in N.Z.] between 1900 and 1920 and what are called *swaggers* now usually look more like tramps; they cannot even roll their swags neatly."

This reference draws attention to the fact that "tramp" is far too loose an expression to apply to all the species in Australia, for there are many differences in degree. Generalized Americanisms like *hobo* and *bum* are inadequate to suggest the shades of meaning between a *bagman* and a *whaler*, between *travelling labour* and the *sundowner* or *battler*, between the *coaster* and *coiler*, between the *swamper* and *drummer*, although all are used for wanderers and itinerants of various types.

The English use of *bagman* for a commercial traveller anticipated our application of the word to a swagman (1907; this was probably due to rhyme) and later to a tramp who travels the country with his possessions in a suitcase (1918).

The *battler* is one of our poorest wanderers. Stephens and O'Brien defined him as "a hard-up traveller or swagman, who is battling for a crust". An 1898 use of the word for a prostitute and another quotation in 1909 for any person who has to struggle for a means of existence, underline its deadbeat origins.

Falling into almost the same class is *toe-ragger*. *Toe-rags*, otherwise known as *Prince Alberts* or *Prince Alfreds*, are worn by tramps of low degree in place of socks to prevent blistering. *Toe-ragger* is doubtless derived from this. In Sydney "Truth" of 12 January 1896 a writer suggested that it came from the Maori *tau rika rika*, a slave, used as a term of contempt. This far-fetched theory has little to sustain it. The term is also used as a general pejorative and in prison argot is applied to a man serving a short sentence.

Karl Lentzner, who compiled a small dictionary of Australianisms in 1891, wrote that "in Australia, ne'er-do-wells are termed *sundowners*, *dry hash* or a *stringybark*". This generalization dismisses some important points. In 1881, for instance, A. C. Grant defined a *dry hash* as a man who would not shout drinks, but drank alone. Six years later the meaning is to be found extended to "a miser, a bad egg; also, by implication, a loafer". *Stringybark* had uses before the middle of last century to describe

crudity, lack of polish and "of the bush". *Tough as stringybark* and a *stringybark person* have early textual records, and the use of the noun for a ne'er-do-well is an extension of these.

The original *sundowners* were not quite as Lentzner put it. They were certainly of ne'er-do-well type, since they dodged work by arriving at outback stations at sunset with their request for rations. Bush romanticism has turned the sundowner into the typical Australian tramp, and the original sense has become partly obscured. *Sundowning*, for instance, serves as a description of the life of any outback vagabond.

Bender (1885) and *drummer* (circa 1890) were once popular terms for tramps of slightly better class than the sundowner. A *drum*, of course, is the equivalent of *swag*, *bundle*, *curse*, *matilda*, *shiralee*, *parcel*, *turkey*, *donkey*, *national debt* or *bluey* as the tramp's rolled blanket is variously called.

The *scowbanker* or *skullbanker* (1866), *coaster* (1878), *sundodger*, *overlander* and *overland man*, *tussocker* (a New Zealand term), *never-sweat*, *sooner*, *river-banker*, *barber* (apparently from the Latin *barbarus*, a stranger) and *coiler* were other vagabonds who loafed in the outback or who drifted from station to station with little other object in life than to satisfy food requirements.

The *Murrumbidgee whaler* was a tramp of especially indolent type. He often camped for long periods wherever fish could be caught, especially along big rivers like the Darling, Murrumbidgee and Murray. According to an old-timer correspondent: "They were so apt to lie about the size of the 'whales' they caught that a generic name for this class of unemployable traveller came into being." This explanation is open to some doubt. It should be noted that in our early days New South Welsh horses exported to India for army use were known as *walers*. The original *Murrumbidgee whalers* may therefore have been N.S.W. tramps, as distinct from vagabonds who came from other states,¹¹ especially when we find J. Inglis describing a resident of New South Wales as a *waler* in his "Our Australian Cousins" (1879).

Blood brethren of the *whaler* (this spelling is retained because tradition holds mainly to the "whale" theory¹²) to be found

¹¹ A map of Australia in G. C. Mundy's "Our Antipodes" (1852) shows the N.S.W.-Victoria boundary as the river Murrumbidgee, not the Murray as it is in fact.

¹² The late A. S. Kenyon, histor-

ian, wrote to me: "The original *Murrumbidgee whaler* was the possessor of a boat; he worked up to the sources, Albury, Wagga, for the summer and the lower river for the winter. He caught fish and sold or

in Sydney and Melbourne respectively, are the *Domain dossier* (1894) or *Domain squatter* (circa 1900) and the *Yarra banker* (1908), specialists in the art of loafing. The true *Yarra banker*, however, is a soapbox orator who frequents the banks of the Yarra River in Melbourne. Thus we have *Yarra bank* for soapbox oratory, illuminated by the following quotation from the Sydney "Mirror" of 19 August 1942:

"Mr Curtin's attack on members of the Opposition was pure *Yarra bank* in the manner of 30 years ago," said Mr Menzies, a former Prime Minister, to-day.

To which Mr Curtin replied: "The Yarra Bank was my university."

Traveller and *commercial traveller*, together with *food inspector*, *bird of passage*, *wallaby tracker*, *tourist*, *footman* and *professional pedestrian*, are often applied to itinerants. The refined expression *travelling labour* is noted in New Zealand by Edward Wakefield in 1889, this being used for tramps in general. E. S. Sorenson, in "Life in the Australian Backblocks" (1911), adds illumination with the comment: "Nearly everywhere in country parts *traveller* is more often heard than *swagman*." (Eighteenth century English slang had *traveller* for a tramp.)

Bicycle bum is an Australian adaptation of the U.S. *bum*; a *dole chaser* is a tramp who wanders the country living on food obtained by orders issued from *dole stations* by the police¹³; a *steel jockey* is a tramp who *scales* a train or rides without paying; a *bower-bird* is a tramp of low degree who lives on scraps of food picked up anywhere (after the collecting habits of the bird); a *swamper* is an itinerant who entrusts his swag to an obliging teamster to carry on his waggon (Stephens and O'Brien say he was also a traveller on foot to the Westralian goldfields);

bartered them for tucker. Latterly the term has been used loosely for any swaggie, infesting or frequenting the rivers, but whaler is the correct version."

¹³ Station rations handed out to itinerants are usually referred to as *the dole*. Boldrewood, "Ups and Downs" (1878), defines it as "a pound of meat and a pannikin of flour, which is now found to be the reasonable minimum, given to every wayfarer by the dwellers in Riverina, wholly irrespective of caste,

colour, indisposition to work or otherwise".

Periodical rations handed out to back-station workers were known as *the ten, twelve, two and a quarter*, i.e. ten pounds of flour, twelve pounds of meat, two pounds of sugar, a quarter pound of tea. The sugar, generally termed *ration sugar*, was of the commonest type. E. B. Kennedy, "Four Years in Queensland" (1870), says it was "a horrible sticky black mess", and another writer in 1886 says that it was "brown sugar of coarse type".

and a *busker* is—as in English slang—an itinerant musician, although we possibly use the expression more freely in Australia than the English do.

American slang has *deadbeat*, a sponger, a worthless idler. Australia has extended the meaning to apply to any penniless person, especially one who is down on his luck. *Dead-broker* is another Australianism. Both are more than half a century old.

These expressions bring us nearer the city and the *inspector of city buildings* as a city tramp has been called. *Susso* for unemployed sustenance and *compo*¹⁴ for workers' compensation are also worth noting, together with *compo king*, a man who fakes or exploits injuries in order to draw such compensation.

Expressions to describe being on the tramp are varied and colourful. Here are some of the best of them: *on the wallaby*, *on the track*, *on the wallaby track*, *on the sunshine track*, *to swag it*, *chase the sun*, *coast about*, *to packsling*, *to wear the Jubilee robe* (an obsolete use from Queen Victoria's days), *to waltz matilda* (already noted at length), *to push the knot or be on the knot*, *to sundown*, *fish for whales* and *whaling* (describing the life of a Murrumbidgee whaler), *to live off the land*, *to lead the bundle*, *hump one's swag* or *bluey*, *carry the curse* (also *carry or hump a drum*, *parcel*, *shiralee*, etc.), *coil one's turkey* (strictly speaking this applies to the rolling of a swag), *to sleep with Mrs Green* and *to doss in the Star Hotel* (the last two reported from New Zealand).¹⁵

Bluey, for a swag, is worth particular mention, since there have been arguments as to its origin. It was derived from the use of *bluey* for a blue-coloured blanket. For instance, in "The Days When the World Was Wide" (1896), Henry Lawson alludes to "*blueys* which were rotting in their swags".¹⁶ A character in "A Bush Tanqueray" (1900)¹⁷ by A. Dorrington, says: "I'm gone in the 'igh notes through sleepin' in the wet without a *bluey*." Mrs Aeneas Gunn, "We of the Never Never" (1907), says that she "was sound asleep, rolled up in a *bluey*".

It is worth noting that *bluey* is rarely used for a swag in

¹⁴ *On the susso* and *on the compo*, in receipt of either unemployed sustenance allowance or workers' compensation.

¹⁵ *Jabbing trotters* and *tea and sugar burglarings* are a couple of doubtful synonyms listed by Lawson in "The Romance of the Swag".

¹⁶ In "While the Billy Boils"

(1896) Lawson refers to a *bluey* and describes it as "a stout, dumpy swag, with a *red* blanket outside . . ." which indicates that by the mid-nineties blue blankets were no longer regarded as inevitable features of tramps' possessions.

¹⁷ Published in "The Bulletin Story Book" (1901).

Tasmania.¹⁸ This was because a type of blue-coloured rough smock or jumper, probably worn originally by the convicts, had come to be known as a *bluey*.¹⁹ A correspondent in the Melbourne "Argus" of 3 January 1896 refers to "the blue-shirt race", meaning convicts. Added light is thrown on the term by a writer in the "Bulletin" of 11 February 1899, when he says:

The term bluey is never applied to a swag in Tasmania. The Tasmanian bluey is a rough overcoat of blue-grey, woollen, and never seen by the writer in any other part of Australasia.

To push the knot is another phrase the "Bulletin" is able to elucidate to good effect. Here is a comment on bush lore by a writer in that journal of 8 October 1898:

[The swagman's] swag consisted of blanket, spare singlet, pair of moles, towel, couple of coloured handkerchiefs for binders, and woollen muffler for sling (wool being springy and easy on the shoulder). Swag was fastened near the ends with binders, through which was passed the sling, so arranged that the knot came just below the breast and gave a rest for the hand, which thus acquired a habit of pushing the sling outwards from the body as the man neared the end of his tramp.

Reference has already been made to *Prince Alfreds* or *Prince Alberts* as synonyms for *toe-rags*. These terms developed from the malign suggestion that the Prince Consort was so poor when he came to England to marry Queen Victoria that he wore toe-rags instead of socks. Rough lace-up boots were also known as *Prince Alberts* in Queensland in the closing years of last century.

An associated Australianism was *royal Alfred* for a particularly large swag, "with tent and all complete, and weighing part of a ton", as Lawson comments.

Among other items in the swagman's equipment are the *camp sheet*, "the canvas wrapping of a swag, used as a shelter and waterproof bed in sun and rain"²⁰; the *Wagga*²¹ *blanket* or *rug*, a covering made from two chaff or corn sacks, carefully cut open and stitched together (also called *Sydney blankets*); *bobbers*, *corks* or *flyjerks*, small pieces of cork—sometimes wood—

¹⁸ *Derwent drum*, a swag, is a particularized Tasmanian use.

¹⁹ *Bluey*, both for the cloth and an overcoat of such material, has a fairly wide trade use in Australia. Clothes rationing regulations issued on 6 June 1943 noted that twelve coupons would have to be surrendered for "men's overcoats, new type

(unlined, waterproof duck or canvas, and unlined smock type made from 'bluey' fabric)".

²⁰ The quotation is from Ernestine Hill's "Great Australian Loneliness" (1937).

²¹ Wagga Wagga is a town in New South Wales.

fastened by string to the brim of a hat to ward off flies²²; *early risers*, thin blankets which, because of their poor protection, induce a tramp to rise early; the *hipper*, something soft—such as a piece of possum skin or a stuffed strip of bagging—to put under the hip when lying on hard ground; and, of course, the *billy*.

As vagabonds are our principal specialists in train-jumping, the serviceable Australian verb *scale* requires more than passing mention. To *scale a rattler* is our version of the U.S. *jump a rattler*; but *scale* has wider uses than this. It means, (a) to ride on a train, tram or bus without paying a fare, (b) to steal, or to rob a person, (c) to swindle. One can *get scaled*, in the sense of being done down, when overcharged for goods, and also when an assignation is not kept. A George Street corner, near Central Station, Sydney, is known as *Scale 'em Corner*, "where appointments are made when one has no intention of keeping them". To *scale*, *scale off* and *do a scale* all mean to depart hurriedly. A *scaler* is a person who rides in a vehicle without paying, or one who decamps with money with which he has been entrusted.

To *ride plush* also means to ride on a train without paying. In tramp slang a *sweeper* is a train that stops at all stations; this is probably from the "sweeping up" of all *steel jockeys* who decline to take the train "on the fly".

Other items in the tramp's vocabulary are *pitch*, a camp (e.g. to *have a pitch with someone*, to share a camp); *the long paddock*, the open road; *Struggle Valley*, nickname for any collection of rough humpies, usually beside a river, where down-and-outs live; *cigarette swag*, a small swag carried by a tramp within city limits; a *round*, a swagman's beat in the suburbs of a city²³; to *battle the subs*, to hawk goods from door to door in

²² According to bush humour, the wearing of *corks* is one of the stages of *mulga madness*, as the queerness of *hatters* or lone outback dwellers is called. Other stages are reputed to be the carving of quandongs and the carrying of puppies in a billy ("Bulletin", 25 February 1909). Lawson makes the note in "The Romance of the Swag", "the corks would madden a sane man sooner than the flies could". *Troppo, tropical madness or neurasthenia*, and *bloody-mindedness* were terms concocted in World War No. 2 to describe the good-natured tomfoolery

in which bored soldiers indulged while waiting for action at tropical bases. This tomfoolery erupted in strange ways, such as in the milking of non-existent cows, in holding greyhound races without dogs, in the insistence that everyone salute a quite mythical girl-friend supposedly clinging to one's arm. There seems a substantial link between the original *mulga madness* and these forms of pleasant insanity.

²³ In the "Bulletin" of 14 June 1902 a writer described two Sydney *rounds*. One was known as *the single triangle*, "along Lane Cove Road to

suburban areas; *durry*, a cigarette; *bumper* or *dumper*, a cigarette butt, and *bumper-sniping* or *dumper-dashing*, the picking up of cigarette butts (also known as *blink pickings* or *blinks*).

3.—MONEY

In Australian parlance *on the strap*, *on the outer*, *stiff*, *stumped up*, *broke to the wide*, *stumered*, *in the blue* and *flyblown* describe pennilessness at its worst. On the other hand a man well supplied with cash is said to be *holding*, *financial*, *standing*, *in the note* and to have *what it takes*. He may even be fortunate enough to have *a roll Jack Rice couldn't jump over*. Jack Rice was a racehorse noted for his performances over hurdles.

To *flyblow* a person, to relieve him of his money by trickery or robbery, was used in Australia more than ninety years ago.

Since the condition of penury and that of being a borrower are closely allied, it is worth while to recite some of our numerous indigenous terms for what the English call "scrounging".

Here are some pleasant euphemisms: *to put the acid on someone*, *to put the hard word on* (this phrase is more commonly used with amorous implications), *to put the drags on*, *put the nips in*, *put the fangs in*, *put the weights on* (with the concomitant phrase, *to pull the weight*, meaning to pay up), *to stick it into someone* or *to sting*, *tickle* or *nip a person*, and a rather unusual selection of phrases on the subject of ears—*to chew*, *lug* or *nibble someone's ear* (or *lug*), together with *lug-biting* and *ear-chewing*, *borrowing*, and *ear-lugger*, a borrower.

It will be noted that most of these expressions imply some sensation of pain to the subject of a borrower's attentions.

The "ear" phrases are Australian variations on the earlier English slang, *to bite someone's ear*, *ear-biter* and *ear-biting*. *To hum*, another term meaning to scrounge or borrow, also has English antecedents, although it is now mainly our own. In eighteenth century England it meant to cheat or deceive.

To pole and *to bot* are strictly indigenous. *Poling*, imposing on, found its way into a Parliamentary Report by the N.S.W. Libraries Advisory Committee (1939). The Committee said that inter-library loans had been summed up as "poling instead of

Hornsby, thence to Parramatta and back to his base by way of Sydney". The other was *the double triangle*,

"from Parramatta to Penrith, thence to Windsor and back to Parramatta".

pooling". *To bot* is apparently related to *bots*, larvae of insects of the family *Oestridae* or bot-flies, which infest the stomachs and internal organs of several types of animals. Any parasite came to be known as a *bot* and the term fell into a natural niche to describe a cadger. *How are the bots biting?* as a greeting, and *to have the bot*,²⁴ to feel out of sorts, irritable, are popular in New Zealand.

A refinement of the term occurs in deadbeat slang, in which *cold botting* is used for a straight-out request by a down-and-out for food at doors; *cold biting* indicates a bald request at doors for money. *Cold pigging*, on the other hand, describes the hawking of goods from door to door without strategical trap-pings, nothing more than the simple hawking of cheap articles.

Hummer, *poler* and *bot-fly* are additional synonyms for a cadger.

To dip south is to search in one's pocket for money; *to have death adders* (or *fishhooks*) *in one's pocket* is to be mean; *to be broke for something* is to be short of it (e.g. *broke for a feed*, to be hungry); *to break* is an Australianism meaning to cost (e.g. *how much did that hat break you for?* How much did that hat cost?); and *stumer*, a penniless person, a failure, appears in such variations as *to be in a stumer*, to be worried, to be "in a stew", *to come a stumer*, to crash financially, *stoomey* and *stumered*, broke.

Just as penury has led us to borrowing, so does borrowing lead us to the many slang names Australians have invented for money. As generic terms for money we have *celluloid*, *chaff*, *gons*, *hoot* (from New Zealand, *ex* the Maori *utu*), *oodle*, *oscar* (from *Oscar Asche*, noted Australian actor, as a rhyme on "cash"), *sheen* (in English cant it was used earlier for counterfeit coin), *shug* and *sug* (clippings of the word *sugar*), *spon* and *spons* (clippings of *spondulicks*).

And now, money in its various denominations:

½d.—*mock* or *oddie*.

1d.—*bronze*, *brum*, *cobar* (from the name of a N.S.W. mining town), and *sliver*.

3d.—*tray*, *Alma Gray*, *Dora Gray*, *Dollie Gray* (all rhyming slang), *joe* or

²⁴ In obsolete Scottish dialect *botts* or *batts* was used for a bowel complaint or the colic. The "Oxford

Dictionary" quotes a lone example from 1816. The antipodean uses are completely independent.

joey,²⁵ *pen*, *scrum* (perhaps a rhyme on the English *thrum*), *trezzie*, *trizzie*,²⁸ and *trut*.

6d.—*zack* and *sax* (the latter is a clipping of the Scottish *saxpence*).

1s.—*deaner* (originally English, but more used in this country than abroad) and a rhyming slang version, *Riverina*; *og* and *rogue* (probably a clipping of the English rhyming slang *rogue and villain*, a shilling); *colonial robert* (a play on the word *bob*); *jo* *dillon* and *john dillon* (another rhyme on shilling); and—during the 1890s in Sydney—a *Bishop Smith*.²⁷

2s.—*sway* and *swy*²⁸ (from the German *zwei*, two), *two-peg* (from the Scottish *peg*, a shilling), and *twob* (an elided form of *two bob*).

10s.—*sane* or *sein* (from the German *zehn*, ten); *half a flag*, and *half a yid* (the last is a rhyme on *quid*).

£1—*carpet*, *cracker*, *fiddley* and *fiddley-did* (the last two from a rhyme on *quid*), *flag*, *frog* and *frogskin*, *jim* (from the old English slang *jimmy o' goblin*, a sovereign), *John Dunn*,²⁹ *tiddley*, *toe-rag*, *smacker*, *yid* (a rhyme on *quid*), and *slice*.

£5—*spin*, *spinner*, *spinnaker*, and *blueback*.

£50—*monkey*³⁰ (the English use of this word is for £500, which is also current in Australia), and *half a spot*.

£100—*spot*.

£250—*half an ape*.

£500—*ape* (an Australian version of the English *monkey*).

£1000—*winky*.

Wink, used for sixpence, is an equivalent of the English *kick*. Thus, *one and a wink*, means 1s. 6d. A *grinder* is a small coin; a *Broken Hill*³¹ is a silver coin; *docker* and *motser* or *motza* are used to describe large sums of money.

Two Australian uses of particular interest are *razoo* and

²⁵ Former English slang had *jo* for a fourpenny piece, which Partidge says was *ex* the name of *Joseph Hume*, politician and financier. The Australian use is probably independent and comes from our use of *joey* for a baby kangaroo, possum, etc.—the smallness being emphasized.

²⁶ English slang has *tizzy*, sixpence.

²⁷ From the name of a former primate of Sydney who once paid off a cab with a shilling and thereby earned publicity. The "Bulletin" of 9 January 1892 noted: "Primate Smith thinks that 1/- is a legal cab fare, just as 3d. is legal church tender". The same journal of 26 November 1892 said that the primate's nickname was *Bishop Bob-cab*

Smith. By 1899 Sydney "Truth" had developed the nickname to *Shillingy-Smith* and *Bob Smith*. The use for a shilling has long been obsolete.

²⁸ *Swy-up* is used as a synonym for *two-up*; *swy-deaner* for 2s.

²⁹ A writer in the "Bulletin" of 25 September 1897 said that this was taken from the name of the founder of an Australian bank.

³⁰ Strangely enough this is a reversion to an old English use. Partidge notes that, "the 'Oxford Dictionary' cites an 1832 text in which, probably erroneously, the term means £50."

³¹ After the name of the noted silver-producing centre.

skerrick. Like those two hard-worked Australianisms, *haven't a bolter's* and *haven't Buckley's*, these words are employed mainly in negative contexts. For instance, one says that one *hasn't a brass razoo*, but one rarely says that one actually possesses a razoo; in the same way we can say that there *isn't a skerrick of anything left*, but a remnant itself is not described as a *skerrick*.

Loosely, *skerrick* may be defined as "a small amount of anything, a small amount of money", but it nearly always indicates the lack of, rather than the possession of anything. The origin is to be found in Yorkshire dialect³² in which it is defined as "the smallest thing or fraction". English dialect also has *scuddick*, anything of small value.

Razoo presents a more difficult problem. It may, as Partridge hazards, be derived from the Maori *raho*, but this is extremely doubtful, especially as *razoo* is not in wide currency in New Zealand.³³

In Chapter II reference was made to *rum currency* as used at the beginning of last century. From the same period in our history came *dump* and *holey dollar*. The former was a small silver coin, worth 1s. 3d., in Australian circulation after 1813. It had been punched out of the centre of a silver dollar which, valued at 5s., became known variously as a *holey* (or *holy*) *dollar*, *colonial dollar*, *government dollar*, *pierced dollar* and *ring dollar*.

The 1898 edition of "Webster's Dictionary" gives an additional Australian meaning for *dump*, "a small piece of gold formerly current in Australia at the value of a sovereign", but this lacks verification. No mention of such a gold coin is made by C. P. Hyman in his "Account of the Coins, Coinages and Currency of Australasia" (1893).

A *calibash* was an order for payment in money or in kind, used by New South Wales farmers in the 1890s and later. *Joey* and *joey-cheque* are applied to worthless cheques. *Shin-plaster*, a correspondent states, is still current for "a paper token

³² I quote from R. W. Hamilton's "Nugae Literariae" (1841).

³³ A list of slang terms for coins as used in New Zealand is given by a writer from that country in the "Bulletin" of 14 January 1899: *zweideener*, *brace of pegs*, *twopence*, used for a florin; *flimsy*,* *rag*,* *carpet*, £1 note; *thickun*,* *goldie*, a sovereign; *half thickun*, *little goldie*,

a half sovereign; *caser*,* *K*, and *bull*,* a five-shilling piece; *half bull*,* *half caser*,* *two and a buck*,* 2s. 6d.; *colonial robert*, *deener*,* *bob*,* 1s.; *tizzie*,* *sprat*,* *tanner*,* 6d.; *thrum*, *half-tiz*, *tray* and *tray-piece*, 3d.; *brownie*,* *copper*,* and *Maori half-crown*, 1d. Terms marked with an asterisk are listed by Partridge in English slang.

issued by storekeepers in remote districts, and used as small change. Some storekeepers bake the notes to make them brittle and more liable to fall to pieces in someone's pocket; thus an illegal profit is made." This term was used originally in America for a banknote.

An old expression popular in Australia sixty years ago was *brusher*. Departure without paying one's debts was described as *giving someone brusher* or *entering for the brusher stakes*. An old English slang verb *brush*, to run away, is probably the origin, although Morris suggests that it comes from an Australian use of *brusher* for a small wallaby. In Dyson's "Fact'ry 'Ands" we find the meaning extended: *giving someone brusher* means leaving one's employment or walking out of a job. *To give someone the brush-off* in modern slang implies rejection or complete dismissal, but this has American antecedents.

Blue, a bill (also used widely for a summons); *to blister*, to charge exorbitantly for goods (as well as to borrow a substantial amount from someone); *poultice*, a mortgage; *alley up*, to pay one's share; and *Jewish pianola*, a cash register, are also worth noting as established Australianisms.

CHAPTER VI

THE CITY

1.—LARRIKINS

IF an Australian boy or youth does not have a little of the larrikin in him, he is a milk-sop being scarcely worthy of his inheritance. There is something so typically Australian about the larrikin that it is a mystery why he appears so rarely in our literature. Dyson's "Fact'ry 'And's" (1906) and Louis Stone's "Jonah" (1911) are the only notable books to date to have taken the larrikin as a subject and handled him faithfully.¹ Yet here, perhaps, lies one of the most fruitful sources of indigenous writing—one of such richness in colour that it is impossible for Australian authors to ignore it indefinitely.

The larrikin, moreover, is not the product of any one period in our history. He dates back to the *cabbageites* and *cabbage-tree mobs* of the early nineteenth century. He was the original *currency lad*, tough, defiant, reckless. When our capital cities began to grow he came into his own as a member of the *pushes*. His heyday was probably in the 1880s when the power of the push held communities in terror and when one of the larrikin's greatest delights was to kick a man to death.² This ruffian's teeth were drawn and his brutality curbed, but as an individual he is by no means extinct. As long as there is an Australian city's backstreets for him to find a place in there will be a larrikin.

It was in the Sydney *Rocks*, as Dawes Point was known in the early days of last century, that the larrikin was born. He was not, of course, known by the name *larrikin* until the 1860s, but long before then he had become a recognizable Australian. In the

¹ L. W. Lower gives us a humorous glimpse of him in "Here's Luck", and both Henry Lawson and C. J. Dennis have handled him well in other media.

² "Larrikinism . . . is a very de-

plorable feature in Australian life. There is an utter absence of all that is manly [i.e. refined] in most of the actions of larrikin pushes."—G. J. James, "Shall I Try Australia?" (1892).

notorious Rocks—"the St Giles of Sydney" as many writers delighted to point out—where slang and vulgarity were mixed in lavish quantities, where harlots and riff-raff, ex-convicts and the scum of all the oceans collected, here in the Rocks was born the Australian hoodlum, as tough and vicious and as well-versed in unconventional ways of speech as any person in the world.

Writes M. Davitt in "Life and Progress in Australia" (1898): "Sydney and Melbourne have their larrikin language just as London has its slang vocabulary." We can expect, as a matter of course, that this language will be as vigorous and vulgar as the larrikin himself, and if we do not perceive also that his influence on Australian speech as a whole has been immense we shall have reason for disappointment.³

But first of all several of his characteristics should be underlined. Primarily there is his toughness, recklessness and brutality. Then there is his instinctive desire to be one of a company. Much of our large drinking vocabulary built round the *shout* and the companionship it implies, together with the Australian's contempt for the *Jimmy Woodser* or the man who *drinks with the flies*, is closely linked with the larrikin's masculine idea of mateship.

This is no casual phenomenon of recent growth. It dates from our earliest days. In 1826 we find P. Cunningham commenting: "Our currency lads are noted for spirit and courage as well as for great clannishness."

Then, again, there is the larrikin's attitude to dress, something of which he is self-conscious while maintaining the pose that such self-consciousness is ridiculous. "The larrikin taste in dress runs to a surprising neatness," notes Louis Stone in "Jonah". The bell-bottomed trouser, the *nan-nan* (straw hat), the wasp waist—these were symbols of the larrikin a few generations ago and, in modified form, they are symbols of him today. There is so much kinship between the *lair* and the *larrikin* that one cannot think of the former without linking it inevitably with the latter.

There is a hard, sleek finish to the larrikin's Sunday-off dress, not given to colour, severe, almost uncomfortable, yet perhaps

³ In a notice on Dyson's "Factory 'And's", the "Bulletin" (14 March 1907), wrote: "The Australian slang that the Beauties (i.e. Melbourne factory girls) speak causes us some

speculation as to how the book will be received in England, where possibly the language will prove as difficult to penetrate as a Somerset dialect is to us."

just a shade overdone, just sufficient to bring those words *flash* and *lairy* to your thoughts, just a little too burnished up for a walk in the park with a girl, or for a two-up school, or for holding up a dance-hall wall. Perhaps it is because the contrast with the workaday larrikin, who cares little for his appearance, is so great. Perhaps it is because the larrikin's vicious contempt for anything effeminate—in speech, in thought, in manners—erupts in a way that sometimes takes him perilously close to effeminacy where dress is concerned.

Yes, here is certainly a character worth putting into fiction. He is someone worth knowing. He is—dare we say it?—perhaps rather than anyone else, the average Australian.

To understand the larrikin's intimate link with Australia it is necessary to step back a little in our history. For more than half a century Australia was almost entirely a masculine country. As late as 1840 the proportion of males to females was two to one. Not until about 1880 was a reasonable balance struck between the sexes.

It was inevitable that men should be thrown together, that they should rely on one another, that a strong accent should be placed on companionship. This was the heritage passed on to men and youths long after the population balance between the sexes had been adjusted.

The larrikin's heyday, during the 1880s, was a period of tremendous urban growth when, within a decade, the populations of Melbourne and Sydney jumped by nearly 75 per cent, and when the drift of people from country to capital was already under way.

H. H. Hayter, former Government statistician of Victoria, declared in 1892, in an address⁴ before the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science:

The increases which have occurred [in urban populations] point to the probability that when the census of 2001 is taken, half the population of Victoria and perhaps also half that of South Australia and 40 per cent

⁴ "The Concentration of Population in Australian Capital Cities". Hayter says: "In the ten years ended with 1891 the population of Greater Melbourne increased from 283,000 to 491,000, or by 74 per cent; that of Sydney from 224,000 to 387,000, or by 72 per cent; and that of Adelaide from 104,000 to 133,000, or 28 per cent; whilst in the five years

ended with 1891 the population of Brisbane increased from 74,000 to 92,000, or by 25 per cent.

"Melbourne now contains 43 per cent of the population of Victoria; Adelaide 42 per cent of that of South Australia; Sydney 34 per cent of that of New South Wales; and Brisbane 23 per cent of that of Queensland."

of that of New South Wales will be found to be living within the metropolitan limits.

Hayter's expectations have been more than fulfilled in less than a third of the time limit he fixed. At the 1933 census it was revealed that of New South Wales's population of 2,600,000 more than 1,235,000 lived in Sydney, or 46 per cent; of Victoria's population of 1,820,000 more than 990,000 lived in Melbourne, or 54 per cent; of South Australia's 580,000, more than 310,000 lived in Adelaide, or 53 per cent; of Western Australia's 438,000, more than 200,000 lived in Perth, or 46 per cent. Collectively, nearly 44 per cent of Australia's population of 6,629,839 was living in the principal cities in 1933.

It is clear from these figures that, no matter how great the word-making enthusiasm of our original rural inhabitants, their efforts could no longer outweigh those of the city, and since the larrikin and his kind are the most likely individuals to prove expert in creating new forms of expression it is to them that we must look for material. It may be, as the "Bulletin" once observed,⁵ that larrikins were "as much the outcome of the prosperity of the labouring classes as of anything else" and that they "do not as a rule belong to well-to-do classes",⁶ but the fact remains that the larrikin speaks with a representative voice and a good deal of what he has said has sunk its roots so deeply into our language that it will never be torn out. No watertight walls can be erected around this larrikin speech; it is not a self-contained argot, although, at its best, it is often too obscure for the uninitiated to understand.

One of the features of the Australian language is its persistent "lowbrowism". There is a deliberate speaking-down, an avoidance of anything suspected of being highbrow in thought or word, a straining after the simplest and lowest common denominator of speech. The reasons behind this tendency towards lowbrowism will be examined later. Its effect is to make larrikin slang far more typical of Australia than we might anticipate.

England—and probably even America—would not expect her Cabinet Ministers to talk in shirt-sleeve language, or her City Fathers and intelligentsia to indulge in plebeian scraps of jargon. Yet this is taking place in Australia. Larrikin speech

⁵ 8 January 1881.

⁶ P. Clarke, "The New Chum in Australia" (1886), says, however, that

"the colonial larrikin is often of respectable parentage and well-dressed".

(and once again it must be stressed that this is a somewhat loose term) is the lingua franca of urban Australia.

As will be seen in subsequent pages a good deal of the larrikin slang current half a century and more ago is now dated or obsolete. Here is a segment of a jingle published in the "Bulletin" of 9 February 1895 which stresses the point:

Lord strike me fat! what yer givin' us?
 Don't you poke borak at me, you old jay!
 You didn't 'ave to pay for my clobber;
 I'm ryebuck and the girl's okay.
 Oh, she's good iron, is my little clinah;
 She's my cobber an' I'm 'er bloke.
 Got a cigar in yer old clothes, matey?
 Lor' blue me if I'm not dead for a smoke.

This limping lyric is notable mainly for providing us with the first-known printed use of *cobber*—another adaptation of English dialect.⁷ *Strike me fat! poke borak at, ryebuck, clinah, good iron, Lor' blue me!* (a version of *blimey*) and *dead for* (i.e. in need of) also appear to be Australian originals.

A much more competent poem—perhaps one of the most successful "slang" poems ever produced—is "The Great Australian Slangue",⁸ written by W. T. Goodge in 1897.⁹ It is long, but worth reproducing in full to give some evidence of Australia's slang vocabulary half a century ago.

'Tis the everyday Australian
 Has a language of his own,
 Has a language, or a slanguage,
 Which can simply stand alone.
 And "a dickon pitch to kid us"
 Is a synonym for "lie",
 And to "nark it" means to stop it,
 And to "nit it" means to fly!

⁷ From the Suffolk verb *to cob*, to form a friendship for, or from the Cornish *cobba*, or from other dialectal uses of *cob* and *cobbis*, a person. Attempts have been made to link the term with the Yiddish *chaber*, a companion, and the aboriginal *cobbra*, the head. There is no support for the latter theory, but the independent growth of the Hungarian *haver* (pronounced *hover*) for a friend or mate, can be noted as support for the former theory.

⁸ The U.S. journal "American

Speech" (February 1930) said that the word *slanguage* was invented in 1925 or thereabout. This is hopelessly astray. It was in English use in 1892 according to the "Oxford Dictionary", and, as shown above, was in Australian use in 1897.

⁹ First published in the "Bulletin", reprinted without acknowledgement to the author in M. Davitt's "Life and Progress in Australia" (1897), subsequently included by Goodge in his "Hits, Skits and Jingles" (1899).

And a bosom friend's a "cobber",
And a horse a "prad" or "moke",
While a casual acquaintance
Is a "joker" or a "bloke",
And his ladylove's his "donah",
Or his "clinah" or his "tart",
Or his "little bit o' muslin",
As it used to be his "bart".

And his naming of the coinage
Is a mystery to some,
With his "quid" and "half-a-caser"
And his "deener" and his "scrum".
And a "tin-back" is a party
Who's remarkable for luck,
And his food is called his "tucker"
Or his "panem" or his "chuck".

A policeman is a "johnny"
Or a "copman" or a "trap",
And a thing obtained on credit
Is invariably "strap".
A conviction's known as "trouble",
And a gaol is called a "jug",
And a sharper is a "spieler"
And a simpleton's a "tug".

If he hits a man in fighting
That is what he calls a "plug",
If he borrows money from you
He will say he "bit your lug".
And to "shake it" is to steal it,
And to "strike it" is to beg;
And a jest is "poking borak",
And the jester "pulls your leg".

Things are "cronk" when they go wrongly
In the language of the "push",
But when things go as he wants 'em
He declares it is "all cush".
When he's bright he's got a "napper",
But he's "ratty" when he's daft,
And when looking for employment
He is "out o' blooming graft".

And his clothes he calls his "clobber"
Or his "togs", but what of that
When a "castor" or a "kady"
Is the name he gives his hat!

The Australian Language

And our undiluted English
Is a fad to which we cling,
But the great Australian slanguage
Is a truly awful thing!

Here is a lyric worthy to rank alongside W. E. Henley's classic translation of Villon's "Straight Tip to All Cross Coves", each stanza of which ends with the line "boose and the blowens cop the lot". It includes many expressions, however, which are not Australian, such as *prad*, *joker*, *bloke*, *quid*, *panem*, *chuck*, *pull your leg*, *ratty* and *togs*, but there is a sufficient sifting of indigenous material to make the poem notable. Moreover it can be accepted as an authentic record of the type of slang once used by larrikins and their kind.

Sydney and Melbourne have always been the natural homes of *the Talent*, as *half-axes*, *nuts*, *rats*, *lurchers*, *pebs*, *pebbles*, *pushites*, *horribles*, *bashers*, *booveroos* and other members of *pushdom* have been known at various stages of our history.

Here is a brief list of some Sydney pushes¹⁰ active in the early 1890s¹¹: *the Rocks*, descendants of the first families of old Sydney; *the Livers*, composed mostly of butcher-boys and gentlemen engaged in kindred occupations; the *Burley Boys*, bullies from the classic purlieus of Woolloomooloo; and the *Gipps Street*, a mixed and motley crew."

And here is a list of Melbourne pushes as recorded by a writer in the "Bulletin" of 14 July 1900: *the Ivanhoes*, *the Red Roses*, *the Flying Angels*, *the Eastern Road push*, *the Montague Dingoes*, *the Montague Flying Squadron*, *the City Road Flying Squadron*, *the City Road Bug Hunters*, *the Bowveroo push*, of Carlton, *the Fitzroy Murderers* and *the Richmond Dirty Dozen*.

During the past half-century in Australia we have used *forty* to describe a crook or sharper. It possibly has some Adelaide antecedents. Stephens and O'Brien declare:¹²

¹⁰ R. H. Thornton, "American Glossary" (1912), notes the U.S. use of *push* for "a combination of low politicians". He adds that "the term is derived from Australia where it is applied to gangs of rowdies and young criminals". However, it can be noted that—as J. H. Vaux observed in his "Vocabulary of the Flash Language" (1812)—*push* was old English cant for "a concourse of people, a crowd", and it probably

arrived in America direct from England, not via Australia.

¹¹ Noted by "Whaks Li Kell" (Daniel Healey) in "The Cornstalk His Habits and Habitat" (1893), p. 66.

¹² Some support is given to this story by W. J. Barry, author of "Up and Down" (1879) who relates the tale of an Australian bank robber for which forty men were, at one time and another, charged and dis

In Hindmarsh, Adelaide, in the late '70s and '80s there was a particular crowd of roughs known to all and sundry as *the Forty Thieves* and the particular aversion of magistrates and police . . . *Forties* in Sydney preceded *larrikins* as a name for street prowlers, gamblers, thieves, etc.

The same observers offer us some important notes on the word *push*, which, they declare, was "first heard in Sydney by the writer about 1885 or 1886. Originally, crowds of toughs or *larrikins*; later, any coterie, clique or class".¹³

The *bell-bottomed push*, they say, was "a section of the Melbourne public who mostly affected bell-bottomed trousers", and the *nan-nan push* was a gang of Sydney youths who affected the *nan-nan* or straw hat "either from cheapness or showiness".¹⁴

Most of the history of the word *larrikin* has been given earlier. Australian variations on this imported theme include *larrikinism* (1870), *larrikiness* (1871) and *larrikinalian* (1893). We have also made considerable alterations to the English cant *leary* or *leery*, wide-awake, knowing, cunning (uses which survive in America), which now appear in the forms *lairy*, overdressed, *to lair-up*, to get dressed, especially in a flashy style, *lair*, a person who overdoes his dressing,¹⁵ and *lairize* or *lairize around*, to act as a lair or to show off. An unusual meaning for *leery*, "a common person", was given in Sydney "Truth" of 27 April, 1924.

Crowe reported in 1895 that *larry* was an Australianism meaning idleness. He is not supported by textual evidence, but this expression may be another elaboration of those given above. *Happy as larry*, meaning extremely happy, is probably a derivative phrase.

Terms like *frill*, *boiled dog*, *jam* and *guiver*, connoting "side" or affectation, together with the phrases *to cut the flash* (1853) and *do the posh*, underline *larrikin* sensitivity towards social posturing. *Tollolish*, overbearing and foppish, *toey*, a swell,¹⁶ and *silvertail*, a social climber or society figure, have been cur-

charged. He says that these men came to be known as "the forty thieves".

¹³ Also used for socialite groups, especially in such a form as *the Government House push*, i.e. people who move in Government House circles.

¹⁴ Goodge, "Hits, Skits and Jingles" (1899) writes of "dudes of the nan-nan style".

¹⁵ *Mug lair* and *bush lair*, used offensively, *all laired up* and its synonym *all mocked up* may also be noted. *To quean up*, which, strictly speaking, means to dress like an effeminate, is used similarly, although usually more contemptuously.

¹⁶ Probably from the contemptuous use of *toe-ragger*.

rent since the 1880s. (Contrasting with *silvertail*, we have *coppertail* and *bronzewing* which describe a member of the hoi polloi, a proletarian.)

The larrikin has a strong desire to be regarded as a *hard doer* or *good doer*, a *hard case*, a *hard thing*, a *finger* or a *dag*, all of which serve to show that he is appreciated by his fellows—tough, maybe, but with the saving graces of sharp humour and bravado.

2.—FIGHTING TALK

One of the inevitable consequences of the larrikin's desire to secure approval from his fellows and to assert his masculinity has been the development of an extensive vocabulary of fighting terms.

Here are some of the best of them: *to bump*, *comb down*, *dish*, *blue*, *king hit*, *dong*, *jolt*, *lift*, *spike*, *sort out*, *stonker*, *rip into*, *top off*, *do someone smartly*, *towel up*, *weigh into*, *wipe*, *knock rotten*, *roll into*, *vacuum*, *quilt* and *stoush* a person. And these are not all by any means. A man who attacks another is said to *come all over him*, *get stuck into him*, *knock saucepans* (or *smoke*) *out of him*, *to have him on*, *to give him curry* or *curried hell*, *to put the cleaner* (or *vacuum*) *through him*, *to make a job of him*, *to wipe* (or *rip*) *hell out of him*, *to mix it* and *put the McGinnis on*, *to knock into* and *take a piece out of him*.

A fight or brawl is described as a *stoush-up*, *rough-up*, *yike*, *smack-up*, *bowl-over*, *fair go*, *hop-out* or *take-on*.

To be beaten is to *get stoushed* or *stonked*, to be *stitched* and to *kiss the cross*. In passing it may be noted that a black eye is a *shiner*.

Stoush is a well-established word, almost certainly derived from English. *To stash*, to stop or relinquish, was recorded by Vaux in Australia in 1812. Boldrewood uses it in 1881 in the phrase "[we] *stashed* the camp", we broke camp. The form *stoush* came into prominence in the 1890s for a blow or brawl and was spread across the world by the diggers of World War No. 1. For a considerable period that war was known as *the Big Stoush*, until a bigger *Stoush* came along in 1939 to force it out of currency. In English dialect there was the expression *stashie*, an uproar, commotion or quarrel, to which the Australian use is probably related.

Stousher and *stoush-merchant*, a fighter or bully, and the phrase

to put in the stoush, equivalent to putting in the dirt, are Australian elaborations.

Since the early 1860s we have used *barney* for a row, argument or serious debate. C. R. Thatcher employs it in his "Colonial Minstrel" (1864) and Boldrewood in his "Ups and Downs" (1878). The first English use given by the "Oxford Dictionary" is for a prize-fight in 1882.

An old larrikin expression that apparently once had a vogue in Sydney was to give someone *Bondi*, implying that a person was severely manhandled. The phrase probably had some link with the Sydney suburb of Bondi, or with the aboriginal *bondi*, the heavy nulla. Sydney "Truth" of 19 October 1890 employs it in the sentence: "A live policeman is on the ground while members of a push are 'giving him Bondi'." In another issue (16 November 1890) the same journal refers to "two or three others who looked fully competent and perfectly willing to give him *Bondi*".

Anger and dislike are described in a variety of ways. A man in a temper is said to be *brushing*¹⁷; to have the *dingbats*, the *pricker*¹⁸ or the *stirks*; he is said to be *ropeable*, *snaky*, *maggoty* or *pippy*; to go *crook*,¹⁹ to do his *block*, *pegs* or *nut*; to get off his *bike*; to get *wet*; to go *hostile*; to go to market; to go *lemony* or *woolly-headed* at a person; and to *rouse on someone*.

A man who has acquired a strong dislike of another person is said to have a *down on* (1849), a *derry on* (1892) or a *snout on him*. He gets someone *set* and *words him*, rebukes him, *hits* or *knocks him*, criticizes him.

Someone or something disagreeable is said to get on one's *works*, *quince*, *quoit* or *tit*, to make one's *nipples ache*, or to give one the *worms*, most of these phrases falling into the category of low colloquialism.

To throw a fit is to *chuck a six*, *sixer*, *seven* or *charley* or to throw a *sixer*, *willy* or *seven* (the phrases in which numbers appear are related to dicing).

3.—THE LARRIKIN'S GIRL

If the Australian male puts considerable stress on his masculinity, it is not because he disowns all contact with the feminine

¹⁷ A writer in the "Bulletin" of 4 June 1898 says that this term was used "between the lower waters of the Namoi and the Castlereagh" (N.S.W. rivers).

¹⁸ A variant of the English *get the needle*, to become angry.

¹⁹ To go (or be) *butchers* and to go *butcher's hook* at someone, are formed by rhyme on *go crook*.

world. It may be, as Marcus Clarke once suggested,²⁰ that the Australian wife of 1977 or thereabouts "will be a thin, narrow woman, very fond of dress and idleness, caring little for her children, and without sufficient brain power to sin with zest", but the larrikin and his kind have always chosen to see the female more as a background for the parade of masculinity, than as a shrinking frail creature demanding suave manners and discreet wooing.

As C. J. Dennis showed in "Doreen" and "The Sentimental Bloke" our larrikin can become maudlin with the best of them, but he is unlikely to reveal his state of mind by much more than a glazed eye and paltering platitudes. He is more inclined to go out and have a fight with someone to prove his own worthiness. His code of conduct in his relations with the female seems to serve mainly as a protection for himself against her. He likes to keep his masculine world self-contained, to insulate himself from softening feminine influences, to retain a solid hard core in his soul against the fripperies and fancies of womanhood.

It is significant that the first indigenous slang term for a girl or woman did not make its appearance until the 1870s, or perhaps slightly before. This was *bart*, which, an old Australian slang dictionary of about 1882 tells us, was used for a girl and "generally applied to those of loose character". An apocryphal story alleges that it is derived from Hobart Town Polly,²¹ a nickname applied to a harlot in the early days of Hobart Town, Tasmania. Confirmation is lacking.

The origin is more probably in a rhyme on *tart*, which came into use in English slang in the 1860s. Modern English slang uses *tart* for a prostitute, but we generally retain it to describe—with the variants *tom-tart* and *tom*—any girl or young woman.

Donah and *clinah* were also in wide currency for a girl or sweetheart before the close of last century. The former was originally Cockney,²² and the latter apparently came to us from the German *Kleine*.

Most popular of modern expressions is *sheila*, which came to us out of the English dialect, *shaler*,²³ although it is commonly

²⁰ "The Future Australian Race" (1877).

²¹ English nautical use of *poll*, a harlot, and the still earlier *moll*, may have influenced the origin of this expression.

²² "Never introduce your donah to a pal" is an old Australian cant phrase, apparently taken from a once-popular music hall song.

²³ This form was listed in Australia by Crowe in 1895.

regarded as pure Irish. This supposition has been due to a marriage of *shaler* with the Irish girl's name *Sheila*—a form of Cecilia or Celia—and has produced such bastardizations as *shielah*²⁴ and *shielagh*²⁵ by writers who have confused its origins.

Other Australianisms for girls or young women include: *bush*, *brush*, *whisker*, *rabbit*, *skinny* (apparently a Westralian term of the 1920s when short skirts revealed feminine legs), *slimdilly*, *chookie* and *chicky*, *sninny*, *snickle*, *tab*, *square girl* or *square jane* (this is from the U.S. use of *jane* for a girl), *clue* (i.e. something to be followed), *bushfire blonde* (a redhead), *a bit of heifer dust* and *a good sort*. The last expression, *a good sort*, is used in colloquial English, but has acquired a peculiarly Australian tang. An amiable girl, especially one likely to respond to amorous approach, is *a good sort*, but it also appears in such sentences as "girls going out with their *sorts*", i.e. boy-friends, and "fellows taking their *sorts* to the pictures", where the sex of the term is changeable.

Virtue is not questioned in most of the above Australianisms. We have another vocabulary altogether for the harlot and her kind: *chromo*, *half-squarie*, *half-and-halfer*, *chippy*, *lowwheel*, *rattlesnake*, *princess of the pavement*,²⁶ *shingler*, *turtle*, *toby*, *fork*, *bike* (a willing girl is sometimes described as *an office bike*, *a town bike*, etc.), *belt*, *wheat belt* and *endless belt* (these appear to be Australian variants of the U.S. *band*, a woman), *barrenjoey* (a play on the Sydney place-name: *barren* + the slang use of *joey* for a child), and *tarry rope* (an old term for a waterfront prostitute who consorts with sailors).

A lesbian is known mainly as a *lezo* and a *lover under the lap*.

A brothel is a *bang*, *jacksie* (Brisbane) and *shop* (Perth).

An effeminate male is a *homo*, *quean* (from an old English use of *quean* for a harlot), *hock*, *poofster*, *punce* (the vowel is sounded as the "oo" in *foot*: the English slang *ponce*,²⁷ a harlot's bully, is the original), *pood*, *quince*, *gussie*, *spurge* and *wonk*. An effeminate is said *to have fairies at the bottom of his garden* and *to perve*. A procurer for homosexuals is known as a *poofster rorter*.

²⁴ Given by the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" and by Jice Doone in his "Timely Tips to New Australians".

²⁵ Used by Brian Penton, "Land-takers" (1934), p. 15: "[She was] just a bit of a *shielagh*."

²⁶ *Nymph of the pave* is recorded in Australia in 1854.

²⁷ *Poncess*, a harlot who keeps a man, is listed as Australian by Crowe and does not appear to have been in English use.

One of the most popular Australian pejoratives came to us from the seamy side of the street. This is *bludger*, originally a man who lived on the earnings of a harlot (there is an 1882 record of this), later any indolent person who imposes on others or whose "scrounging" habits make him objectionable. Stephens and O'Brien note:

The word has come to be applied to any person who takes profit without risk or liability, or without effort or work. Practically any cadger, loafer, bummer or beggar, who has not the excuse of inability to work or thief.

To *bludge*, therefore, means to impose on. The phrase *to bludge on the flag*, to fail to justify one's existence as a soldier, is recorded in W. H. Downing's excellent dictionary of war slang, "Digger Dialects" (1919). The participle *bludging* is also widely used. Kylie Tennant introduces it in her "Battlers" (1941): "You . . . *bludging* little mongrell!"

Bludget, "a female thief who decoys her victims", was included by Crowe in his slang dictionary, but it is open to suspicion.

The Australian has devised numerous expressions for love-making, but many come too close to outright vulgarity to be included here. Here are a few of the terms: *to pirate* or *to be on the pirate*, to be on the lookout for casual feminine acquaintance; *to do a knock* (or *a line*) with a girl, to take her courting (this is a softening of the English vulgarity *knock*); *to track* with a girl, to court her; *to drag on* or *pull on* a girl, to marry her; *to put the hard word* (or *acid*) on a girl, to make a request to her for her favours, also, *to go for the drag off*; *to crack it*, to record a success in an amorous affair (this is solely a masculine term, but it is also used in other senses, meaning to succeed); and the jocular greeting between man and man, *gettin' any?* which draws such set replies as, *climbing trees to get away from it!* *got to swim under water to dodge it!* and *so busy I've had to put a man on!*

Smoodging for love-making—also used to describe toadying—and the forms *to smoodge* and *smoodger* are Australian adaptations of English dialect in which both *smudge* and *smouch* mean to kiss.

Saddling paddock, a popular site for alfresco amours, and *butcher's shop*, a wedding, mainly used in the phrase *to open a butcher's shop*, are two old and obsolescent expressions.

A woman who has infatuated a man is said to *have him by the wool*; and a popular cant phrase among women who admire a man is *he can put his shoes under my bed (any time he likes)*, which should require no elaboration. A variation of the last phrase, *I'd put my shoes in his wardrobe any day*, is used by Sumner Locke-Elliott in his play "Interval" (1939).

4.—GOOD AND BAD

In all slangs the good, the bad and the stupid always secure wide mention, because these are some of the simplest and most persistent things upon which we are inspired to comment. The Australian's collection of terms for that which is excellent or notable need yield nothing to England or the United States.

Inevitably associated with this country is *bonzer*, an expression that has developed so many variants that it almost merits a chapter to itself. It came to us by syncope from the American *bonanza*, used to describe (1847) a rich mine, (1875) "a valuable thing, a source of wealth or profit", and (1882) anything large. The origin is in the Spanish *bonanza*, fair weather, prosperity, with its root the Latin *bonus*, good.

In the "Bulletin" of 22 November 1906, a writer notes:

I have noticed repeatedly in the "Bulletin" that what is known here [in Victoria] as *boshter* is called *bosker* in Sydney. We never hear of *bosker* here. There is a *bonza*, a sort of improvement on the *boshter*, and *bonzarina*, feminine of *bonza*. Occasionally one hears of a *dabster*²⁸ (a variety of *boshter*) and *bontosher* which denotes something abnormal in the *boshter* line.

This comment drew a reply from a Sydney correspondent in the "Bulletin" of 20 December 1906:

Boshter is as common as *bosker*—perhaps even more so—in Sydney, and, at least five years ago [i.e. in 1901] a barber in Paddington proclaimed himself, in drunken and disorderly capitals which wandered all over his shop front "The Boshter Barber".

The writer added that *boshter* had been current for ten years or so.

As the first printed example of *bonzer* is not to be found until 1904 (in the "Bulletin" of 14 April) we are left to surmise that this term was either a good deal less popular than *boshter* and *bosker* at the beginning of this century, or that it arrived sub-

²⁸ This is old English slang.

sequent to them. If the latter is correct, then *boshter* and *bosker* are not variants of *bonzer* but independent terms, which merely have similarity in use and sound.

Whatever is the case, these words have left a deep imprint on our language. Here is a list of elaborations on the theme, with the dates when they came into printed use: *bon*, which approximates the French adjective and noun (1906: "Ain't it a *bon*?" asks a writer); *bons* (1904: probably a clipping of *bonzer*); *bonster* (1904: a writer describes it as "that bulwark of the Austral slanguage"); *bonsterina* (1904); *bontoger* (1904: the writer suggests an origin in the French *bon toujours*, always good, and uses the spellings *bontodger* and *bontojer*); *bontogerino* (1908: an elaboration of the above); *bontosher* (1904: also rendered *bontoshter*); *bonus* (1904: "A fair *bonus* is a real trier, a fair goer, or a bit of a don"—an interesting reversion to the Latin original); *bonzerosity*, something bearing notable or excellent features (1906); *bonzerina* (1906: with the subsequent version *bonzerino*); and two variations that have come into use in recent years, *bonziorie* and *bonzo*.

Here are some of the many synonyms for *bonzer* (it should be noted that most of them are interchangeable as nouns and adjectives): *all gee*, *all cush* (from the Hebrew *kasher*, lawful, especially as applied to meat), *blitherer*, *bottler* and *bottling*, *rubydazzler*, *rube* and *dazzler*, *grouce*, *curl-the-mo*, *dodger*, *just the shinin'*, *pearl* and *pearler*, *peg*, *purt* and *purter*, *rip-snorter*, *rorter*, *scutcher*, *snitch* and *snitcher*, *snodger*, *snozzler*, *sollicker*, *swinjer*, *swiz*, *trimmer*, *trouncer*, *whopcacker*, *pewster* and *rumptydooler*.

Curl-the-mo was apparently first used to denote the self-satisfaction of a man who twirled the ends of his flowing moustache. It was then applied to anything meriting approval, was shortened to *curl* and then transferred to *twist*. A *twist* is accordingly something especially good, and a *big twist* is the superlative of excellence. A popular song "Curl-the-Mo, Uncle Joe"—written in praise of Joseph Stalin, who has a large moustache—by Australian journalist Jack Hatch, ends with the words "Big Twist!"

We also describe something especially good as a *gig*, a *snack* or *snackeroo*, as *good iron*, *ribuck* or *ryebuck* (now practically obsolete) and as *ridge*.

Dinkum also has the senses of notability and excellence attached to it on occasions, although it is used mainly to describe that which is honest or genuine. Here again we can look to

English dialect to supply an origin, which appears in the form *fair dinkum*, fair play. Boldrewood first introduced us to the term in 1881 when he wrote of "an hour's hard *dinkum*", meaning hard work, in his "Robbery Under Arms". *Fair dinkum*, meaning genuine, occurs in the "Bulletin" of 5 May 1894. *Square dinkum* and *honest to dinkum* may also be noted.

The variants *dink*, *dinky* and *dinky-die* have followed almost as a matter of course and, since the diggers of World War No. 1 made great use of the word, we find Anzac soldiers described as *Dinks* and *Dinkums*.²⁹ A native-born Australian is called a *dinkum Aussie*. News or information that can be relied on is called *the dinkum oil*³⁰ and *dinkum article* (synonyms are *good oil*, *right oil*, *straight oil* and *straight wire*). We have even made a superlative out of the term, which already implies superlative characteristics, and have developed *dinkumest*³¹ just as we have taken *bonzer* into the forms *bonzerer* and *bonzerest*³² in our desire to lay stress on what we say.

Perhaps for the reason that Australians are usually tempted to find refuge in expletives and "bad" language to describe disagreeable things, our vocabulary of terms for that which is disliked is not large.

Sope is an old larrikin word in this category. A writer in 1907 describes it as "the direct antithesis of *bonzer*. . . . It expresses all that is condemnable in anybody or anything." It is now obsolete. *Drack* and *bodger* are modern equivalents.

Perhaps the best terms we have to replace *sope* are *cow*³³ and *fair cow*, both of which can be used with great flexibility. Their modern use was foreshadowed in 1864 by C. R. Thatcher who, in his "Colonial Songs", applied *cow* to a bullock. Today, anything or anyone objectionable can be called a *cow* and it is probably through the influence of this word that we have taken *chow*, used for a Chinaman, and made it a permissible synonym for *cow* when applied to a person.

²⁹ Details on these uses are given in the chapter on War Slang.

³⁰ "The *Dinkum Oil*" is an Australian advertising slogan used by the distributors of Mobiloil. Another Australianism used in advertising is "*Home on the pig's back*"—an illustration of a man riding a pig—which I have seen on the side of a van belonging to a sausage-manufacturer.

³¹ For example, "the *dinkumest*

looking devil-dodger".—"Aussie", October 1918.

³² For example, "Trix is the *bonzerest* absolutely girl that ever was.—N. Lindsay, "Saturdee" (1933)—and "You'll make the *bonzerest* couple ever seen this side the Tropic".—X. Herbert, "Capricornia" (1938).

³³ In outback use, only after a heifer has borne a calf is she classed as a *cow*. This is an extension of

Up to putty, up to mud, up to tripe, up the pole, up the chute, onkus (or honkus) and tatty describe things that are bad, disliked or out of order. An unreasonable demand—such as an excessive price for goods—is called *a bit rough, a bit hot*³⁴ and *a bit solid*.

We have elaborated few U.S. expressions more than the vulgarism *bullsh—t* for nonsense or humbug. At least, it is to be presumed that this is an Americanism, although the vast number of variants we have evolved show that we have made it almost a native. Best known of the Australian versions is *bullsh*, but some of the following run it close: *bull dust, bull fodder, bullock waggon, bull's wool, cowsh, cowyard confetti, Flemington confetti*,³⁵ *heifer dust, meadow mayonnaise, bumstuff, bovril* and *alligator bull*.³⁶ *Bovril* is now almost obsolete, but *bovrilize*, to confuse, render stupid, has developed from it and is still current.

A person given to bragging or empty chatter is known as a *bull artist* or *bilge artist*, a *blow-bag, blower* and *blowhole*.³⁷

Berley describes ground bait used by fishermen. It has been current in that sense for more than sixty years. In the past decade or so, however, we have applied it to humbug or nonsense, e.g. *a bit of berley*, leg-pulling, and in this way have started it off on a new career.

Kidney-pie, kidstakes, macaroni, mash, bilgewater and *borak* cover the same meaning of misleading chatter. Best established of these, of course, is *borak*, which appears in the phrase *to poke borak* at a person, to tease, chaff or jeer at him.

Much academic argument has surrounded the origin of *borak*. Morris, for instance, says that it is an aboriginal word, and the "Oxford Dictionary" goes to the length of suggesting—quite erroneously—that our verb *to barrack* is derived from it. The truth of the matter is that there was probably no such word as *borak* in aboriginal dialects. In any case, *to barrack* comes

the standard English use of the word for the female of any bovine animal.

³⁴ This sense is also found in the French *ça m'a coûté chaud* (literally, that cost me hot), I paid through the nose for it.

³⁵ Derived from the Flemington stockyards, Sydney. This expression was used over the Bathurst (N.S.W.)

radio station 2BS in 1937 and caused a local stir.

³⁶ Alligators are not found in Australia.

³⁷ *To blow*, used in Australia since 1864, or earlier, is a revival of fifteenth century English dialect; *blowing*, boasting, is recorded in Australia in 1858. America has also used these expressions extensively.

from English. As all early textual quotations of *borak* are found in aboriginal pidgin,³⁸ we must regard it as highly probable that the English *barrack* was taken over by the aboriginals in their efforts to talk English.

Writing on aboriginal pidgin in 1904, Ernest Favenc declared:

There are two words which go back, at any rate, more than fifty years, which sound aboriginal, but I cannot trace them—*chyack* and *borak*, both meaning much the same.

Chyack is probably a corruption of "cheek", influenced by an earlier English use of the same word meaning "to hail, to praise noisily" and "to chaff ruthlessly". There is no reason why we should go past the English language in our search for the origin of *borak*.

To poke borak came into popular Australian use in 1882³⁹ or slightly earlier. Morris says that *to barrack*—which was at one time ruled unparliamentary by the Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly—also made its appearance about 1880. It was used originally in sporting parlance, meaning to shout or jeer at opponents with particular application to the football or cricket field. Derivatives include *barracking* (1885), *barracker* (1892) and *barrackese*, language used by barrackers (1894).

Since the middle of last century Cockney slang had contained the term *barrikin*, for jargon or speech, borrowed from the French *baragouin*, gibberish. This use of *barrikin* comes close to the original Australian *barracking*, and probably influenced it. Joshua Lake points out that provincial English contains the terms *barrack*, to brag, and *barracker*, a braggart.

Mishearing has probably been the cause of *poke borak* at being converted to *poke borax at*, an interesting example of the law of Hobson-Jobson or the displacing of unfamiliar by familiar words owing to similarity in sound. *Poke borax at* was used in 1890. Another variation was *poke mullock* (worthless spoil or debris is called *mullock*), which subsequently developed into *poke muck* and then into *poke mud*, all meaning to tease or chaff. So well-established are these expressions that Henry Lawson dismisses the *borak* or *mullock* altogether in

³⁸ An 1845 quotation: "You pill-milly jumbuck, plenty sulky me, plenty boom, *borack* gammon", meaning "If you steal my sheep I'll be angry and shoot you, no fool-

ing!" An 1856 quotation: "*Borak* you ever see black fellow with wad-die [wooden] leg."

³⁹ "Bulletin", 9 September 1882.

"While the Billy Boils" (1896) when he speaks of "*poking it at him*".

Fools of one kind and another have carved a considerable niche for themselves in Australian speech and little explanation is needed for any of the following: *lardhead*, *loop*, *nit*, *plat* (a clipping from *platypus*), *quoit*, *hoon*, *tonk*, *twit*, *Billy Muggins*,⁴⁰ *blob*, *boofhead*,⁴¹ *bunny*, *lolly*, *dilpot*, *dollypot*, *gaylo*, *drip*, *flathead*, *possum*, *gammy*, *gazob*, *gimp* and *gup*.

Guppy, *soapy*, *dilly* (the forms *dilpot* and *dillypot* come from this), *drongo* and *sonky*, mean silly or foolish. The state of being stupid is described variously as being *off one's kadoova*, *pan*, *pannikin*, *tile*, *top* or *saucer*, as being *dingbats*, and as having any one or more of the following: *the coconuts* (a Queensland term), *the cogwheels*, *the white ants*, *the Darling Pea*, *the quandongs* (the last two are mainly bush terms), *a shingle short*, *a sheet short* or *a shingle off the roof*.

5.—WOWSERS AND THEIR KIND

Since the Australian is probably the lowest educated English-speaking person in the world,⁴² he is obviously doomed to fill the role of a cockshy for all the petty moralists, religious fanatics and other humbugs who infest the average social group. He is a prey to all purveyors of prejudice and misinformation.

It was no accident that skyrocketed the word *wowser* to a position of enduring importance in our language. Moral and social philistinism, which run hand in hand with ignorance and a low standard of education, had endowed us with the brand of clerical mind that battens on mild and normal pleasures and exaggerates them into orgiastic lusts. It is the mind typical of ill-educated communities, where vision is clouded by prejudice

⁴⁰ From the U.S. slang *muggins*, a fool, influenced by *Billy Noodle*, a man who is foolish about women or girls.

⁴¹ From the English *buffthead*, a stupid person, or dialectal *boof*, stupid. *Boofhead* is the name of a cartoon strip character in the Sydney "Mirror", since 1941.

⁴² B. Penton, "Think—Or Be Damned" (1941), p. 30, points out that Australia spends, per head, on

primary and secondary education £25 5s. compared with New Zealand's £28 13s., South Africa's £34 18s., England's £37 4s., and Scotland's £37 5s. A. J. Marshall, "Australia Limited" (1942), also stresses our low standard of education compared with other countries. Here is a comment by Professor J. V. Duhig, of Brisbane, on 15 May 1944: "Less is spent on the education of white children in Australia than in any Empire country."

DIGGER DIALECTS

A Collection of Slang Phrases used by the
Australian Soldiers on Active Service

By

W. H. DOWNING

Late 57th Battalion, A.I.F.

LOTHIAN BOOK PUBLISHING CO. Pty. Ltd.
MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY

DIGGER DIALECTS

The first dictionary of soldier slang published after World War I
was the work of an Australian.

and where common sense is interpreted by a succession of clichés and slogans.

Fatuous drinking hours, stupid betting legislation, a glorification of the half-baked academic mind, an illogical brand of censorship, soothsayers and law-givers out of grocers' shops and barbers' saloons—here is a cross-section of Australian society intimately linked with our low standard of education.

In more ways than one the *wowser* is a typical Australian.⁴³ At any rate the word came into currency because some such expression was essential.⁴⁴ The first use of the term I have discovered is in an alliterative "Truth" heading of 8 October 1899—Willoughby Wowsers Worried.

Legend has it that John Norton, politician and owner of the journal, invented *wowser* from the slogan "*We Only Want Social Evils Remedied (Righted or Rectified)*", but this amiable theory lacks confirmation.

All the important variations of *wowser* were first used by "Truth". When on 3 May 1942, the Sydney "Sunday Telegraph" used the phrase "they raised a *wowsing* quibble", the paper published a special note on the front page to the effect that at last the verb *to wowse* had been invented. The statement was incorrect. In the first place, the verb *to wowse* had not been invented, but only a theoretical participle used adjectivally. In the second place "Truth" had done a much better job thirty-five years earlier when⁴⁵ it referred to "the vinegary and pessimistic *wowsings* of the oratorical picture painters of Hell".

Also invented by "Truth" were *wowserism* (1906), *wowserites* and *wowserdom* (1907). *Wowserish* and *wowseristic* have followed by natural development.

Our concept of the *wowser* has always been closely linked with the cleric, and it is to be expected that this fact should have left some imprint on our speech. Here are some self-explanatory Australianisms: *bible banger*, *bible basher*, *bible hawk*, *devil dodger*, *amen snorter*, *grassseater* (a Seventh Day Adventist) and *hallelujah hawking*. While on the subject of religion we can note that Australia was apparently responsible for the *Christian Israelite Sect*, a group of Southcotians, followers of John Wroe, who came to be known as *beardies*—so-called from the lengthy

⁴³ H. L. Mencken, American slang authority, says that he has been trying to introduce the word to the U.S. for many years, but without success.

⁴⁴ "A beautiful word . . . coined to meet an undeniable need."—A. J. Marshall, "Australia Limited", p. 56,

⁴⁵ 27 January 1907.

beards they grew. This expression is still heard in New South Wales, north-west Victoria and north-east South Australia.

Two other indisputably Australian sects are the *Victorian Church*, the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, constituted in 1859, as severed from the Established Church of Scotland, and the *Australian Church*, a breakaway movement from the Victorian Church, founded in Melbourne in 1885 under Dr Charles Strong.⁴⁶

The slang use of *tike* or *tyke* for a Catholic also appears to be Australian, perhaps taken from the English application of the word to a Yorkshireman, although the analogy is not clear.

Nark was originally used in English cant for a police spy or stool pigeon, but in Australia it comes close to being a synonym for *wowser*. *To nark*, to annoy or infuriate, was originally dialectal; from this verb we obtained the common nounal version. *Holy Joe* was another English term, used in sea slang for a parson; but once again we have changed its meaning until its *wowser* characteristics are undeniable.

Lemon avenue, used especially for a female *wowser* (this was apparently first given currency in the "Woman's Mirror") and *ratbag*, an eccentric or sometimes *wowserish* person, appear to be indigenous. *Ratbaggery*, for the actions of a *ratbag*, is a useful extension. Roy Rene,⁴⁷ one of our noted stage comedians, helped to popularize the expression *ratbag* and may possibly have originated it.

Another Australian synonym for *wowser* is *a grape on the business*.

6.—MINOR PEOPLE

We have numerous utility expressions for people, such as *king dick* and *say-so*, for a boss or leader, *sparrow*, *slab*, *squib*, *nugget* and *streak*, for men of varying sizes, *fang carpenter*, *gum digger* and *gum puncher* for a dentist, *greasy*, a butcher, *rabbit*

⁴⁶ 1845-1942. A church flourished in Flinders Street, Melbourne, for some years, but subsequently support was lost and a transfer was made to a smaller building in Russell Street.

⁴⁷ His proper name is Harry Van der Sluice. In the "ABC Weekly" of 23 August 1941 an interviewer asked him: "Tell me, Mr Rene, all this slang you use, the words so characteristic of Australia, and phrases

like 'I'm a wake-up to you'—where did you pick them all up?"

To which Mo is reported to have replied: "Pick them up? Pick them up? I didn't pick them up—I originated them!"

In the same interview he was also quoted as saying: "As a matter of fact, in the show business today slang doesn't mean much"—an opinion open to considerable dispute.

snatcher, a midwife, *bottle-oh* and *bottle shepherd*, for a bottle collector.

Stephens and O'Brien tell us that a *brewer's jockey* is "a man who rides about with the driver of a brewer's waggon, helping him load and unload on the off-chance of a share of the drinks which fall to the lot of a brewer's man".

A schoolteacher is called variously a *chalk-and-talker*,⁴⁸ *guzinter* (i.e. one "guzinter" two, two "guzinter" four, etc.), a *bid* or *biddy*.

An eavesdropper is an *earwig*; an inquisitive person, a *stick* or *stickybeak*.⁴⁹ *To stick* or *stickybeak* means to be inquisitive, and *stickybeaking* is the practice. An interesting nursery cant phrase that has developed round this word is the set answer to a child's question, "What's that?"—"Flypaper for a stickybeak!"

Skiter and *skite* (used both as a verb and a noun) are Australian clippings of the original Scottish *bletherskite* which was taken into U.S. slang as *blatherskite*.⁵⁰ We put the verb into use in 1864 and have good reason to regard it as our own.

Pitcher and *bugler* for chatterboxes (we say a man is *bugling* when he is boasting or bragging); *cheer chaser*, one who curries favour with the mob; *grizzleguts*, a person given to complaining; and *offsider*, an assistant or intimate, are also Australian. We are probably also entitled to lay claim to *flatite*, a person who lives in a city flat (*flatette*, a small flat, also appears to be indigenous), *lounge lice*, a local adaptation of lounge lizards, and *vip*, a miserly person.

7.—POPULAR JARGON

Any attempt to split up the Australian language into sections so that various terms may be grouped together obviously leaves many loose ends hanging—loose ends which ought to be recorded, but which do not fall easily into a connected story.

Here are a few minor groups worth note:

To accost or approach a person: *to barge up to*, *float up to*, *blow up to*, *line up to*, *bang up to* someone; *to breast*, *to bridge* and *to bump* a person.

⁴⁸ U.S. slang had *chalk-talker* (1888).

⁴⁹ Politely rendered *sticky nose* by the "Courrier Australien" of 12 February 1943.

⁵⁰ An Australian version, used by the "Bulletin", 13 January 1883, was *bladderskite*.

To depart, especially in a hurry: *to smoke, smoke off, sling off, hive off, go for one's quoits.*

To arrive at a place: *to lob* somewhere. To return: *to lob back.*

To make an attempt at something: *to have a fly at, have a stab at, give something a pop.*

To complain: *to mizzle* and *to whinge* (whence come the nouns *mizzler* and *whinger*, and the verbal nouns *mizzling* and *whinging*). The former seems to be a conjunction of "moan" and "grizzle"; the latter is from English dialect.

To stink: *to hoot* and *to ponk* (by rhyming slang the South Australian place-name *Onkaparinga* is used for a stench).

And to conclude, a brief glossary of tailings:

a ball of muscle. Descriptive of vigour, energy and good health—e.g. "How are you?" "I feel a ball of muscle today."

burl, to give it a. To make an attempt at something.

clever. Well, in good health, used only in negative sense—e.g. "How are you today?" "Not too clever", meaning out-of-sorts.

crack on, to. To discover.

crople on, to. To take.

dice, to. To upset, throw away.

dip one's lid, to. To raise one's hat.

dwell on, to. To follow a person.

fed with. Fed up with, of which it is an abbreviation.

fizz out on. To let down, betray.

full jerry, to. To understand.

full up of. As for *fed with.*

go a raker, to. To fall heavily, come a gutzer.

guiver. Flashy talk calculated to impress a listener. Also *to guiver*, talk in such a fashion, and *sling the guiver.*

juicy about, to be. To understand, to be wise to something.

mote, to. To travel or move quickly.

nadget. The head.

over the edge (or *fence*). Unreasonable, beyond the pale of fairness or decency.

pass in one's marble. To die.

put the mocks (or *moz*) *on, to.* To upset a person's calculations, to spoil a person's game.

square off, to. To apologize, to produce a glib explanation for some lapse or misdemeanour.

squib on, to. As for *fizz out on.* (*Squib*, a coward, is Australian.)

strength of. The reason, meaning, object of something—e.g. "What's the strength of this news?"

strong of. As for *strength of*, of which it is a variant.

sweet. Ready, prepared, satisfied—e.g. "Have you enough money?" "Yes, I'm sweet."

throw a map, to. To be sick.

timebomb. A taxi-meter.

tinarse, tinback, tinny. Extremely lucky, an unusually lucky person.

toey. Worried or anxious.

trizzer. A lavatory.

tryanthewontigong. A thingumebob.

whip the cat. To cry over spilt milk. Whence, *cat-whipper*, one who cries over spilt milk.

whips of. Much, an abundance of—e.g. *whips of time*, with plenty of time to spare.

CHAPTER VII

THE UNDERWORLD

1.—CROOKS OF TODAY AND YESTERDAY

JUST as there is a close link between the ordinary Australian and the larrikin as we have studied him in the last chapter, so there is an intimate link between the larrikin and the underworld. The push and its members constitute the great levelling influence in Australian speech, the common ground on which cant, slang and colloquialisms have met and fused. It is the medium through which hundreds of expressions have struggled up from obscure or questionable origins to the status of colloquialism in Australia.

In the survey of early convict slang, relatively little attention was paid to cant in the strict sense of that term. What we were concerned with was the record of convict life, rather than of any underworld society the convicts might have built up amongst themselves.

We are fortunate that Vaux compiled a vocabulary of old underworld cant while he was a convict in Australia early last century,¹ for, although the bulk of that cant hailed from London and English prisons, it provides us with an intimate glimpse of the speech habits of Australia's first white inhabitants.

Vaux gives us a chance of seeing that scores of expressions, which we might be tempted to believe have reached us solely through American talkies, have, in fact, histories of more than a century.

Here is a brief selection from his observations:

bash. To beat.

blow the gaff. To reveal a secret.

bounce, to. To bully, talk loudly, affect importance.

chats. Lice.

cheese it! Stop it!

dollop. A large quantity of anything.

fence. A receiver of stolen goods.

frisk. To search.

gray. A coin with two heads or tails.

grub. Food.

job. Robbery.

¹ In 1812.

kid, to. To deceive.
mizzle, to. To run away, decamp.
nuts on. Infatuated with.
office. A hint or signal—e.g. give the office.
prad. A horse.
put up affair. A preconceived plan.
ramp. A trick, offence.
ring in, to. To defraud.

school. A number of persons met together to gamble.
shake, to. To steal.
sharp. A gambler, swindler.
snitch, to. To betray.
stink. An uproar.
traps. Police officers.
turn (it) up. To cease, stop.
up the spout. In pawn.

If all these old English words with lowly beginnings have become acclimatized in Australia we can see that this is with excellent reason. That the Australian is content to use them today is not due to any perverse desire to "talk American", but to the fact that generation after generation of Antipodeans has found these expressions in the national vocabulary and has put them to service.

This, however, is not the type of underworld cant with which we are mainly concerned. This is external material belonging properly to England. The Australian offerings are sufficiently numerous to stand on their own feet.

Among the terms quoted above from Vaux was *traps* for police. During the gold rush days Australia modified the word to describe *mounted* police, just as we took *trooper*, which described a soldier in English slang, and applied it also to mounted men. England was originally responsible for the word *cop*, which Australia elaborated into the now-obsolete *copman* and *copperman* and which, by a process of rhyme, gave us the popular Australianisms *john hop*, *jonnop* and *hop*. England also seems to have used *jack*, *john* and *johnny* for a policeman before we did, but these words now have their main currency in Australia. England took the French *gendarme* and turned it into *Johnny Darby*; we have altered it to *john darm* and *john dunn*.

We also call a policeman a *rat*, *mug copper* or *mug john* (these two last terms are regarded as objectionable by the police) and *walloper*; a detective is a *scone* or *hot scone*; a plain-clothes railway detective is a *dog*.

The inhabitants of Australian crookdom fall into two reasonably well-defined groups—the artisans or "working class" of thieves, murderers, etc., and the parasitic "intelligentsia" who live by trickery and swindling.

Crooks in general are known as *takes*, *twicers*, *forties* or *artists*. Australians also employ *artist* in much the same way as Americans use *fiend*, to describe someone who is enthusiastic and

expert in some vocation or other, although we do not always imply admiration for the accomplishment. Thus we have *bilge-artist* and *bull-artist*, persons given to bragging or talking nonsense, *booze-artist*, a drunkard, *gyp-artist*, a swindler, and *pig-skin-artist*, a jockey.

Thieves are described variously as *night hawks* or *night hunters* (these expressions also denote prostitutes), *burstlers*, *barbers*, *dwelling dancers*, *stoops* and *possums*.

A *necklace* is a garrotter, a *stick slinger* is a thief who works in company with a prostitute, the *break man* and *bumper up* are confederates of pickpockets, a *shoddy dropper* is either a seller of worthless serge or a common swindler, and a *Bengal Lancer*² is a razor slasher.

Although *con man* seems to have been originally a U.S. term, in more ways than one it describes the typical Australian crook. Here is an uninvited tribute from a detective in the Tower Police Court, London, in 1938³:

I have been in this kind of work for years, and I think that 95 per cent of the confidence tricksters in this country either come from or have lived a long time in Australia.

If, however, we are reluctantly obliged to abandon claim to *con man* out of deference to earlier American exponents of the craft, we can at least claim *con girl* and we are also originators of the following terms for various sharpers, tricksters and others who live by their wits: *spieler*, *eeler-spee*, *eeler-whack* and *illy-whacker* (the last three are formed by transposition and mutilation from the first: a trickster of this kind is said to *whack the illy*), *lurk man*, *nineteener*, *piker*, *rorter*, *scaler*, *ram*, *amster* (or *ampster*) and *amsterdam*.

In sideshow parlance an *amster* is a decoy who works with a sideshow operator to induce the public to spend its money. He is a close associate of the *spruiker* or *gee-man* who talks the public into entering a booth or into buying cheap goods.

Stool pigeons—a class of crook scorned by all genuine practitioners—have a significant variety of names in Australia. Here is a list of well-established expressions worthy of a notable place in any underworld cant: *crab*, *copper-nark* (this is an extension of the original English *nark*, an informer), *dead-copper*, *fizz*, *fizzig*,⁴ *shelf*, *shelfer*, *top-off*, *dropper man* and *stinker*.

² From the Bengal make of razor.

³ Published in the London "Morning Advertiser", 24 August 1938.

⁴ Current since the 1890s or earlier. Numerous early writers on Australia—e.g. D. Collins, "Account

The *standover* or *standover man* is also an Australian native. To *work the standover*, to demand money in exchange for "protection", is a line of criminal business that has developed particularly around the *S.P. shop* and *S.P. operators*. These latter terms refer, of course, to starting price betting and book-making which is illegal in most States.

To steal or to rob a person is to *frazzle*, *oozle*, *muzzle*, *razz*, *razzle*, *rat*, *roll* (a drunken person who is robbed is said to have been *rolled*), *scale*, *stiffen* or *touch* someone. To *scale* and to *touch* also mean to cheat; to *stiffen* is related to the Australianism *stiff as a crutch*, completely broke, penniless.

A prostitute who robs a man by taking money from his clothes is known as a *gingerer*. She usually works with an accomplice. To *ginger* and *gingering* are associated terms.

To swindle is described as to *work a ready* or to *ready up*, to *rib* a person, and a dodge or scheme to cheat someone is known as a *dart*, *lurk* or *rort*.

To *brass a mug* means to trick a victim into parting with his money, *the brass* being a form of betting trick mainly worked on racecourses. A *bridge* is a fake bet laid with the same object.

One of the most colourful glimpses of Australian prison life in our literature is Vance Marshall's little book "The World of the Living Dead" (1919). Although not of outstanding literary merit, it is an important record of Australian underworld idiom, worthy of a place beside Kylie Tennant's "Foveaux" (1939) and "The Battlers" (1941), both of which deal intimately with dead-beats and criminals.

Marshall⁵ introduces us to the *donkey-dipper*, a lone pick-pocket who works on the principle of "grip, rip and run", the *dead rough-up*, which apparently describes a robbery of this nature, the *push-up men* and *break men* who work as confederates of pickpockets, the *tipslinger* and *magsman*, as racecourse "urgers" are known, the *household barber* and the *dwelling dancer*, transient lodgers who steal from boarding houses.

He tells us that a *toe-ragger* is a prisoner on short sentence,

of New South Wales" (1801), "A Literary Gentleman", "History of New South Wales" (1811), and S. Kittle, "Concise History of the Colony and Natives of New South Wales" (circa 1815)—describe aboriginal fishing spears as *figzigs*. Kittle says it was "a pole from 15 to 20

ft in length, aimed towards a point with four barbed prongs".

⁵ Under the name of Jice Doone he subsequently compiled and published a brief dictionary of Australian slang in his "Timely Tips to New Australians" (1926).

that *ragtimers* and *sixers* are men with six months' sentences, that a *hum* is a "scrounger" or persistent borrower, that *footballers* are warders who kick prisoners, that *the Bay* is a nickname for Long Bay jail, Sydney.

Here are some general underworld terms worth noting: *to blow a tank*, to break open a safe with gelignite; *bridgewater*, any fake article, such as a letter or jewellery, used in working a confidence trick (the use of *bridge* for a fake bet was noted earlier); *on the bustle*, "thieves' and push slang for cadging or obtaining petty objects by cheek or cleverness"⁶; *to chuck a dummy* or *scranny*, to sham a fit in a crowd in order that pick-pockets can work easily; *to tickle the peter*, to rob a till; *to push up for*, to approach a victim; a *smear*, a murder; a *slug-up*, the equivalent of the U.S. "frame up"; a *slinter* or *slanter*, a trick⁷; a *fit*, a case that can be proved against a criminal; *to have the goods on*, to have sufficient evidence against (a criminal) to secure a conviction; *birdlimed*, used to describe a person who has been convicted for another person's crime; *to dud up* and *to face*, to arrange wares for sale so that goods of poor quality are hidden; *to fly canaries*, to pass off used tram tickets as new ones; *to hold one's guts*, to be silent, and *to spill one's guts*, to talk, reveal a secret.

Jockeys and *snipers* are associated with taxi rackets that grew up in World War No. 2. A *jockey* is a taxi-driver's accomplice who pretends to be a passenger in order to encourage legitimate travellers to pay extortionate fares to secure the taxi. A *sniper* is a private motorist, who does not pay taxi-licence fees, but who *snipes* fares from legitimate taxi-men. In racing slang an off-course bookmaker is also known as a *sniper*.

An old Australianism, *to point*, to take unfair advantage of another person, is used in a variety of senses, from swindling to minor evasiveness. A *pointer* is one who exploits another's gullibility or takes him down by trickery; whence come the forms *to work a point* and *pointing*, which describe such underhand activities.

2.—JAIL

Our early convicts called a prison *the logs*; subsequent criminals modernized it to *the bricks*. Synonyms that are obsolete or obsolescent include *the nick* (1882), *peter* (1891), and *booby* (1898). The last is taken from the U.S. or English slang *booby*-

⁶ Noted by Stephens and O'Brien. ⁷ From the Dutch *slenter*, a trick.

hutch, a prison cell; in World War No. 1 it was clipped to *boob* by soldiers and applied to a military prison or regimental guardroom. More modern still are *fridge* and *ice-box* for a jail, the obvious origin being in the U.S. use of *cooler*.

Diamond cracking is hard labour at stone-breaking; *to do polly* is to pick oakum; *to white it out* is to serve a prison sentence in preference to paying a fine. Jail food is *moosh*.

And here is a brief glossary of jail sentences:

lag. Three months.⁸
snooze. Three months.
six doss (in the steel). Six months.
dream. Six months.
zack or zeck. Six months.
rest. Twelve months.
all the year round. Twelve months.
round the clock. Twelve months.
swy. Two years.

lagging. More than two years.⁹
tray. Three years.
jade. An indefinite term.
kath, kitty, kathleen maroon or *kathleen mavourneen*. An indefinite term. (These are related to the refrain of the song: "It may be for years and it may be for ever.") Also *key*.

In Australian cant, a jailbird is known as a *polisher*; a habitual criminal is a *twist* or a *key*; a man who has had no convictions recorded against him is a *cleanskin*; the head prisoners in a jail are called the *upper ten push*; and incorrigibles are *pebbles*.

3.—GENERAL CANT

Among the general utility expressions of our underworld and of those who hover near its edge few are more typically Australian than *cockatoo* and *nitkeeper*, used to describe persons who stand guard while some illegal activity is afoot. *Cocky*, *cockatooer*, *nitkeep* and *nit* are variants of the above, and *to keep nit*, *tab* or *yow* describe their activities. Hotel licensees who indulge in after-hours trading often pay a *cockatoo* to warn them of the approach of police, the role these cockatoos play being similar to that of the *bush telegraphs* who used to pass on news of police movements to bushrangers.

To screw or *spark* means to watch closely; to be *on the grass* or *to reign* means to be at liberty; a *jacky* or *stew* is anything underhand that has been deliberately arranged, such as a boxing contest in which one of the contestants allows himself to be beaten. Cocaine is called *angie* or *angel*, apparently as a comment on

⁸ The original use of *lag*, a transported convict, and *to lag*, to transport a convict, were first recorded by Vaux and were almost certainly associated with Australia, although

it is presumed that they were first in English cant.

⁹ *Lagging*, a term of penal servitude, was also recorded by Vaux.

the effects of that drug, and opium was once known as *twang* in bush slang.

Additional items in underworld vernacular worth mention are: *barrow* or *trawler*, a police van or Black Maria; *blue bird*, a police car; *copshop*, a police station; *chop-up*, a division of spoils; *to drum*, *drum up* and *give someone a drum*, to warn or tip off; *to smoke*, to decamp, and *in smoke*, in hiding; *jay* and *possum*, a trickster's victim; *leather* and *poque*, a purse (the latter is from the English *poke*, a bag or pocket); *seventeener*, a corpse; *squeeze*, an impression made of a key; *squirt*, a revolver; *nose*, a magistrate (a variant of the English slang *beak*); and *lounge*, the prisoner's box in a police court.

Throughout this book, I have endeavoured to weed out English and U.S. expressions so that an unmarred picture may be gained of the indigenous material, although it will be clear that in ordinary speech both Australian and imported expressions are mixed. To show the extent of this mixing I append a vocabulary supplied to me by an ex-con man. He had operated extensively in Australia, but had also been in business in both England and America, so that the jargon he spoke represented an interesting mélange of underworld cant as used in the three countries.

Here is his glossary with the Australianisms italicized and some notes on the non-Australian elements:

- alec*, *dill*, *gay*, *sim*, *lolly*, *bunny*, and *mug*. A trickster's victim. (*Mug* is English slang.)
- strong man*. A confidence man.
- mulligans*, *broads*. Playing cards. (*Broads* is old English slang.)
- tale*, *pitch*, *rott*, *spiel*. Patter used by a showman to draw the public. (*Spiel* is in American slang.)
- ampster*, *ram*, *skill*, *urger*. A trickster's confederate. (*Skill* is U.S. slang.)
- layout*, *setup*. A trickster's plan of action.
- flash*, *front*. A trickster's dress or appearance. (*Front* may be originally U.S. slang.)
- marching money*. Money for travelling.
- still time*. The period of the year when there are no shows. Con men often work from town to town in the country, following the annual agricultural and stock shows where good pickings are to be had among gullible patrons.
- (to be) *resting*, (to have taken) *a trip to the country*. To be in jail. (The latter may be originally English, although the form has perhaps been modified.)
- bite*, *lug*, *nip*, *touch*. To borrow money from a person. (*To nip* may be English; *touch* certainly is.)
- kick*. A pocket (old English slang).

- dip. A pickpocket (English slang).
reefer. Accomplice of a pickpocket.
sleepwalker, porchclimber. A sneak thief.
shelf, top-off, stool pigeon, copper's nark. A police informer. (*Stool pigeon* is U.S.; *copper's nark* is presumably English.)
 paperhanger. A man who passes worthless cheques (U.S. slang).
shoddy dropper. A hawker.
 kite. A worthless cheque (probably English slang).
hay. Money.
 smash. Loose change (English).
 pap. Paper money (English).
the come on. An inducement held out to a victim.
 ice. Diamonds (U.S. slang).
 pewter. Bad silver coins (probably English).
standover, shake down, strong arm. To handle roughly, to bully or intimidate a victim. (*Strong arm* is U.S. slang.)
sandman. A footpad.
square off. An apology.
heat, pressure. Police investigation. (*Heat* is probably U.S. slang.)
to smice, tommy, go through. To decamp, abscond.
fly gay. An intelligent victim. (*Fly*, artful, cunning, is old English slang.)
cop. Profit, a job or trick from which a large return is gained.
blue. A loss.

In several cases above the notes "probably English" or "may be U.S. slang" are appended. This is because, although English and American slang dictionaries do not show the exact shade of meaning given here, they closely approach it. There is, however, enough material left to show that the Australian element is strong and capable of standing on its own feet.

CHAPTER VIII

AUSTRALIA AT WAR

1.—WORLD WAR NO. 1

FEW vulgates have left a more colourful impression upon our language than the Australian soldier. We are too remote from Boer War days to know if our soldiers of those times—they were called *Bushmen*, *Cockyolly Birds*, *Contingenters*, and *Tommy Cornstalks*¹—were as inventive as their successors of World Wars No. 1 and No. 2, but we may feel reasonably sure that they were not idle in this respect.

The war of 1914-18 affected our language in many ways. It not only produced hundreds of new expressions and revitalized old ones, but it sent our men overseas to take that slang to many parts of the world and allowed them to draw fresh colour from new surroundings.

Much of their war slang was, of course, dated or localized; except in the memories of old diggers it was bound to die, because the conditions and circumstances that gave rise to it had ceased to exist. The corrupted snippets of French which our soldiers picked up on the European battlefront, the scraps of Hindustani they learned in Mesopotamia, the odds and ends of Italian, Russian, Arabic, German and pidgin English they acquired in scattered sections of the globe were not, in the main, likely to have a lasting effect upon the Australian language. They might have been forgotten altogether had not destiny brought us another war in which, once again, our soldiers were to roam the world and pick up or re-use a multitude of expressions their fathers had employed in World War No. 1.

As a result, scores of old digger words which, prior to 1939, had been relegated to the lingual dustheap, suddenly became

¹ This was a concession to *Tommy Atkins*, an English soldier. The "Anzac Book" (1916) referred to an

Australian soldier as a *Tommy Kangaroo*. Subsequently *digger* displaced these expressions completely.

useful again. We did not have much opportunity of mutilating the French language once more, except for a brief time in Syria and New Caledonia, but there were ample opportunities for picking up oddments of pidgin English and Arabic.² Arabic like *cha* or *char*, tea; *saida*, good day; *quas kateer* or *quies kiteer*, very good; *maleesh*, it doesn't matter, stepped back into digger slang as though they had never been out of it.

We are fortunate in having had an observer of the acumen and enthusiasm of W. H. Downing³ to keep a close check on the development of slang in World War No. 1. Downing's "Digger Dialects", published in Melbourne in 1919, was not only an excellent study of Australian war slang, but was the first dictionary of soldier speech ever published. That it has been neglected by oversea commentators on slang is a misfortune not so much for Australia as for the commentators themselves, for "Digger Dialects" contains so much valuable material that it ranks as the best study of its kind ever done. Six years after it had been published Fraser and Gibbons produced a dictionary of "Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases". Another five years later Brophy and Partridge compiled "Songs and Slang of the British Soldier, 1914-18". Both these works contained a smattering of diggerisms, a poor and incomplete selection that did anything but justice to the lively imagery of the Australian soldier. Had they but known it,⁴ the picture they presented could have been greatly improved; it would not only have given them a better appreciation of the digger as a lively inventor of colourful idiom, but would have discouraged the writing of such nonsense as the following extract from G. Irwin's "American Tramp and Underworld Slang" (1931)⁵:

Australian.—The underworld cant and slang from Australia, composed largely of rhythmic and colourful couplets, and often spoken with an affected "English" accent. Much of this cant was undoubtedly derived from the Cockney rhyming slang taken to Australia by English emigrants at any time after 1850. Largely used and improved upon (?) by the Anzacs in the

² Writing of slang in World War No. 2 (in "Salt", 22 December 1941). A. G. Mitchell noted: "There will be no fresh French words—unless some are learned from the Free French forces. There will be no Greek words. We were booted out of Greece too soon after our arrival. But the Arabic borrowings will be revived, and there will be Malayan borrowings."

³ Of the 57th Battalion, A.I.F.

⁴ Correspondence I have had with the Imperial War Museum, London, shows that they, too, have been ignorant of Downing's work.

⁵ Published by Eric Partridge who, as an Anzac, should have known better.

World War, this slang lost much of its appeal merely because it was so much used that it became wearisome, while a fair amount of it was in poor taste, even for the trenches. It is but little used in America today and may be regarded as a schoolboy's "hog Latin" rather than as a true slang.

In Chapter XV, section 4, detailed reference is made to what Americans call "the Australian argot", an underworld cant widely used in the United States, but which, in fact, has remarkably little association with Australia.

No one would suggest that Australian soldiers are models of restraint or social polish in their speech,⁶ but they are clearly worthy of something better than relegation, in the manner of Irwin, to the limbo of unmentionable things. If they were capable exponents of vulgarism—and why shouldn't they be, as worthy inheritors of the bullocky's traditional flair for colourful language?⁷—they were capable of a good deal more than vulgarity; they could fight and they had as much wit and imagination as they had courage.

Here is a note added by Downing to his "Digger Dialects":

By the conditions of their service, and by the howling desolation of the battle-zones, our men were isolated, during nearly the whole of the time they spent in theatres of war, from the ways, the thoughts and the speech of the world behind them.

It followed that the members of their little communities—batteries, squadrons, battalions—unique not only in the unanimity of their aspirations, but also in their keen and vigorous mentality, were thrown inevitably upon their own intellectual resources. This Glossary represents the sweat of those strivings; it is a by-product of the collective imagination of the A.I.F.

Australian slang is not a new thing; but in those iron years it was modified beyond recognition by the assimilation of foreign words, and the formulae of novel or exotic ideas. This process of enrichment is common to every living language in all the ages.

Neither is it definite, for there are divergencies within every division; even within every brigade. In the Flying Corps it is different from the

⁶ "We've forgotten all our manners/And our talk is full of slang," wrote Tom Skeyhill, "Soldier Songs from Anzac" (1915).

⁷ In an article on war words in the "Bulletin" of 8 June 1922 Padre Green held that the Australian soldier was not the swearer he was represented to be, and that the Australian's slang phrases excelled those of the British. In the "Bulletin" of 29 June 1922 Will Vernon commented: "A careful observation

led me to the conclusion that 75 per cent of the most filthy-minded diggers were Australian only by adoption, while most of the remaining 25 per cent had the 'Loo or Fitzroy or some similar neighbourhood on their personal records. Naturally, their influence was felt, but it was only a trickling tributary that was quickly swallowed by the broad river representing the Australian's own standard of ethics as regards blasphemy."

THE DETECTIVES' HANDBOOK.

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DETECTIVES' HANDBOOK

One of the earliest detailed records of Australian slang. Date of publication is uncertain, but it was probably in the early 1880s. Author is unknown.

speech of the Infantry. In France, in Egypt, in Palestine, Mesopotamia, Salonika, the Caucasus, Russia, the Pacific Islands, it is nowhere the same. But it savours of a new national type, and its characteristics are the same.

Downing's glossary is by no means all Australian; it contains scores of expressions which were originally English but which were more or less a common possession of all armies in World War No. 1. But almost 60 per cent of the glossary is authentically Australian.

A good deal of the material it contains was, of course, bound to become obsolete. Here are some obviously dated examples: *Abdul*, a Turk; *Annie*, a big German howitzer, which fired on Bailleul during March and April 1918; *Belgium*, a fatal wound; *Bernhardi's Botts*, a regimental band (so-called from General Bernhardi, the apostle of German frightfulness); *The Boil*, the Australian corps in the line (i.e. impossible to take the "core" out); *to come a Cadorna* or *Kerensky*, to come a gutzer; *Corpse Factory*, the Western Front; *Fanny Durack*, the hanging virgin of Albert Basilica (named after a noted Australian swimmer); *Foch's Reserves*, the Chinese Labour Corps.

It would be unfair to Downing to reprint here a complete list of all the authentic diggerisms in his dictionary, but it will perhaps serve as some tribute to his labours if we take a representative selection of his material. That a good deal of this material has passed into popular Australian speech will be clear to any student of our language. Some of these expressions may have been current before World War No. 1, but Downing's little book is the first record of them in print and we will have to accept them as primarily fostered or invented by our soldiers.

Since there is humour in some of the definitions given by Downing, these are for the most part given unchanged:

Anzac button. A nail used in place of a trouser button.

Anzac soup. Shell-hole water polluted by a corpse.

Anzac stew. The food upon which Birdwood's army made a world-wide reputation. It consists of an urn of hot water and one bacon rind. Much appreciated in the Suez Canal zone.

Anzac wafer. A hard biscuit, which was supplied to the A.I.F. in place of bread. One of the most durable materials used in the war.

arsapeek. Upside down.

Aussie. (1) Australia; (2) an Australian soldier; (3) a wound of sufficient severity to cause its recipient to be invalidated to Australia.

bass attack. A drinking bout. (A humorous perversion of "Gas Attack", *Bass* is a kind of English beer.)

beer-swiper. A drunkard.

bird. A military prisoner,

- blowhole*. A garrulous person.
blow to fook. Shatter to fragments.
bludge⁸ on the flag. To fail to justify one's existence as a soldier.
bollocks. Absurd; an absurdity.
bounce the ball. To assert oneself.
branding paddock. Parade-ground.
brasso king. An officer who insists that his men should polish the brass-work on their equipment and uniforms.
broken-doll. An inefficient staff-officer returned to his unit.
buckshee. An acting n.c.o. drawing the pay of a private; a lance-corporal.
bumbrusher. An officer's servant.
camel dung. An Egyptian cigarette.
camouflaged Aussie. An Englishman serving with the A.I.F.
choom. An English soldier.
consumption stick. A cigarette.
concrete macaroon. An army biscuit.
cream puff. A shell-burst.
disaster. A piastre (Egyptian coin).
down south. Hidden, buried.
eat-up. A meal.
F.I.A.. Converse of A.I.F. "Forced Into Action".
freeze-a! A popularity-hunter (corruption of "for he's a jolly good fellow!")
frogsh. Nonsense, humbug. (A version of *bullsh*.)
furph. Abbreviation of *furphy*, a rumour.
gezumph. A big shell.
grouter. An unfair advantage. "Come on the grouter"—gain an unfair advantage.
hairy-belly. A sycophant.
hashmagandy. An insipid and monotonous army dish.
hammer. A cadger.
iodine king. A regimental medical officer.
joey. A military policeman. (Also *Pretty Joey*.)
junker. A superior staff-officer.
kangaroo feathers. (1) A tall tale; (2) an impossible thing; (3) spring millinery of the Light Horse.
kennel-up. Stop talking.
king o' the nits. Provost sergeant.
lance-corporal bacon. Bacon consisting of fat through which runs a thin streak of lean.
maggoty. Angry.
mug gunner. A Lewis machine-gunner.
nose-bleeds. Red tabs worn by staff officers.
on one's pink ear. Down and out.
pig's ear! A contemptuous ejaculation. (This is a euphemism.)
pom, pommy. An English soldier.
pongo. A soldier; one of the rank and file.
possie. Position; place; dugout; home.
pot-hole. A short trench, capable of holding one or two men.
pull on, to. To undertake.
rammies. Breeches.

⁸ This adumbrates the current use of *bludge*, to loaf.

- reinstowments.* Reinforcements.
- ring it, to.* To play the coward.
- rissole king.* An army cook.
- rough-up.* A brawl; horseplay. Also, an unmannerly, violent or irresponsible person.
- shining stars.* An officer commissioned in Australia.
- shrewdy.* A cunning person.
- sin-shifter.* An army chaplain.
- slanter, schlanter.* A trick.
- smudged.* Killed by being blown to pieces by a shell.
- snaky.* Angry, irritable.
- snotted.* Killed.
- souvy.* To steal, find, "souvenir".
- steady lapper.* An inveterate drunkard.
- stoush merchant.* A fighter.
- stoush-up.* A fight.
- tailie.* A man who backs tails in the game of two-up.
- tarp.* A tarpaulin.
- throw a seven.* To die.
- throw six and a half.* Almost to die.
- tinkle-tinkle.* An effeminate man.
- treacle miner.* A man who boasts of his wealth in Australia or his position in private life.
- upter.* Bad, useless; a corruption of "up to putty".
- woodbine.* An English soldier.
- work a passage.* To scheme with the object of being sent back to Australia.
- would-to-godder.* A civilian who "would to God that he could go to the war".
- ziff.* A beard.

Being general in application and not confined solely to the activities or life of soldiers, many of these expressions have become popular Australianisms, such as *beer-swiper*, *blowhole*, *choom*, *eat-up*, *furph*, *maggoty*, *possie*, *shrewdy*, *snaky*, *stoush-up*, *upter* and *ziff*.

Others have lain in abeyance for a quarter of a century to be dragged into use again in World War No. 2. Among revivals can be listed the following: *Anzac wafer*, *pongo*, *disaster*, *reinstowments* (given above); *flybog*, *jam*; *dingbat*, a batman; *dodger*, bread; *Ack-i-Foof*, an A.I.F. man; *bab* and *babbler*, an army cook.

There are several sound reasons—apart from the fact that many diggers of the 1914-18 war have fought again in World War No. 2—why army slang has had a strong influence on Australian popular speech. One important reason is that there has probably been a stronger Returned Soldier movement in Australia than anywhere else in the world. In the second place one of

the Commonwealth's best-known journals, "Smith's Weekly",⁹ has deliberately fostered the digger spirit. Under the heading "Unofficial History of the A.I.F.", "Smith's" has devoted space ever since the first World War to digger memories and humour, with black and white illustrations. This has resulted in an astonishingly faithful preservation of soldier slang, humour and traditions.

It may also be noted that "Digger Dialects" was not the only glossary of soldier speech published in Australia after World War No. 1. An extensive list of war expressions—containing, it should be added, more of the English element than Downing admitted—was included in the 1920 edition of "Aussie", the diggers' magazine during the war, which was specially reprinted for the Australian War Museum. By one of the quirks of unjust fate this glossary is probably better known than "Digger Dialects" and, because of its extensive English incorporations, has misrepresented the digger's word-making abilities.

2.—ANZAC AND DIGGER

Few expressions belong more undeniably to this part of the world than *Anzac* and *digger*, and a brief pause is warranted to trace their history.

The eminent Australian historian C. E. W. Bean suggests¹⁰ that the originator of *Anzac*, as a code name for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, was Lieutenant A. T. White; but claims have also been made on behalf of Sir Ian Hamilton, General Birdwood and Major C. M. Wagstaff, among others. The word first came into use in 1915 and almost immediately began to extend its meaning. Here are some of its many subsequent applications:

(a) The area on Gallipoli Peninsula occupied by the A.I.F. and N.Z.E.F.

(b) Official name of the two Australian and New Zealand Army Corps in France (1st Anzac Corps, 2nd Anzac Corps).

(c) "Universally applied by British troops in France to the Australians and New Zealanders of the two Anzac Corps."—C. E. W. Bean.

(d) "In Palestine, often used to denote men of the Anzac

⁹ Sometimes referred to as *the Diggers' Bible* in the same way that the "Bulletin" is sometimes called *the Bushman's Bible*.

¹⁰ In the "Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18", vol. i (1921), pp. 124-5.

Mounted Division, as distinguished from those of the Australian Mounted Division.”—C. E. W. Bean.

(e) In Australia, and eventually in the A.I.F., used to denote Australians and New Zealanders who served on Gallipoli; later, any soldier from Australasia who fought in the 1914-18 war, no matter where he fought.

(f) Revived in 1939 for any Australian or New Zealand soldier, although he had not then been in action and there was no common command. For a period the expressions *New Anzac* and *New Digger* were used, but after the Libyan campaign in 1941 the *New* was dropped.

Here are some important combinations in which the word is used adjectivally: *Anzac area*, a blanket term for the south-western Pacific war zone (this use dates from January 1942); *Anzac Day*, the date 25 April each year, commemorated as the day in 1915 when Australian and New Zealand troops landed on Gallipoli; *Anzac memorial*, a war memorial raised to honour men of World War No. 1; *Anzac Pact*, an agreement between Australia and New Zealand signed in 1944.

Dr Bean also gives an interesting note on the use of *digger*, which, he says, “became common among New Zealand and Australian soldiers in 1917. It displaced *cobber* (comrade) and *mate* as a form of address. During the third battle of Ypres it came to denote an Australian private, much as Tommy denoted a British soldier.” Bean adds that the term was “said to have been used originally among gumdiggers, especially in New Zealand”. This theory is generally accepted, although it cannot be stated definitely that New Zealanders used the word before Australians did.

Often abbreviated to *dig*, the expression is used widely as an affectionate form of address. In May 1937 the Sydney “Telegraph” described the phrase *good old dig* as “the high Australian accolade”.

World War No. 2 also wrought some changes in the use of *digger*, most important of which was its extension from a soldier on active service to a militiaman in training. The old *dinkum diggers* might regret this loss of their identity, but it is one of the incidentals of lingual growth.

Although it had been current in Australia considerably before 1914, *dinkum* was pressed into hard service during the war. *The Dinkums*, for instance, were the second shipment of Anzacs sent abroad (the first shipment were known as *Tourists* or *Six-*

Bob-a-Day Tourists because some had joined up mainly in a spirit of adventure); the *Super-Dinkums* were the third shipment; and later groups that went abroad were called *War Babies*, *Chocolate Soldiers*, *Hard Thinkers* and *Neutrals*.

3.—WORLD WAR No. 2

A good deal of sensitivity surrounds the use of *chocolate soldier* or, in its more customary form, *choco*. Downing said that the *chocs* of the first war were the 8th Brigade—"Tivey's Chocolate Soldiers. Originally an abusive name; now an honourable appellation". In the second war, militiamen and conscripts generally were called *chocos*, the main difference between these men and the voluntary A.I.F. being that the former could not, until 1943, be sent to fight in non-Australian territories. Their fighting qualities were amply displayed in New Guinea, however, and in a tribute to them the Sydney "Sun" headed a leader on 2 September 1942: "Chocos with Hard Centres".

Other nicknames for conscripts are *sugar babies*, *dingoes* and *wheelbarrows* (because they have to be pushed).¹¹ A man who seeks an easy job remote from the war zone is called a *pannikin soldier*. A soldier of the 1914-18 war who has joined up again is a *retread*; an adjutant is an *adjie* and a batman a *batty* (the last two terms were used in World War No. 1).

That Australian soldiers of World War No. 2 are as determined inventors of new slang as were their fathers is shown in the following extract from the Sydney "Telegraph" in January 1940—at a time, be it noted, when the war had scarcely begun:

Soldiers' slang often shows a rich inventiveness. In the 2nd A.I.F. a Lewis gun is called a *chatterbox* and a man on a kitchen fatigue is a *spud barber*. Favourite expression of the troops, of course, is *Wouldn't it?*—short for "Wouldn't it make you sick?"¹²

Popular phrase to deflate anyone who is talking too big is to tell him, "You'll be a character when you're seventeen."

I.D.Herb is sometimes a Digger way of saying "How d'ye do?"

Members of the 2nd A.I.F. have the same word as the old A.I.F. for

¹¹ An attempt was made in October 1942 to pin the name *koala bears* on the militia, "because you can't shoot at 'em and you can't export 'em", but the term had small currency.

¹² This is a euphemism. The authentic digger form is *Wouldn't it*

root you! A regimental paper "Wiry" (1941) took its name from the first letters of the words in this phrase. Other versions are, *wouldn't it rotate you! wouldn't it drive you mad! wouldn't it rock you! wouldn't it rip you!* (The last two are given in the Melbourne "Argus" of 15 November 1941.)

porridge. It's *burgoo*¹³ to them. Sausages are *snorkers*. A slice of bread is called a *yunk of dodger*.

When a new Digger puts on his bandolier he refers to it as *corsets*. A chin-strap is *free chewing-gum*, a rifle is a *smoke-stick*, a machine-gun is a *death-adder*.

When a sergeant is promoted to lieutenant the men speak of him as a *newly-wed*. A soldier toadying for stripes becomes a *wobbler*. A malingerer is a *swinger* and a compulsory trainee in the Militia is called (good-naturedly) a *dingo*.

The new Diggers have various names for members of the different forces. Some of these names were used in the last war. The Army Medical Corps is referred to as the *Iodines*, and the Tank Corps as *Farmers* (because they go over the land). The Light Horse are *Kookaburras*, the Engineers are *Gingerbeers*, and the Provost Corps are *Squealers*. Men of the Army Service Corps are known as the Army *Slop-carriers*, and of the Air Force as the *Gentlemen*. A militiaman is a *sugar baby*, a member of the Signal Corps is an *S.O.S.* and an anti-aircraft man is a *Bring-me-back-alive*.

Wouldn't it! is perhaps the most effective expression produced in World War No. 2 by the Australian soldier. It quickly graduated to popular use. Other words of particular note were *Nip*, a Japanese soldier (from Nippon); *troppo*, originally a fanciful "disease" contracted by troops while waiting in tropical areas for fighting to begin, but later used to describe a peculiar mental lethargy suffered by men on tropical service; *gigglesuit*, a fatigue dress (whence *giggle pants*, working trousers); *Wog*,¹⁴ an Arab; and *doover*, *doovah* or *doovah-dah* used as a general utility term for a thingumebob, specifically applied to any

¹³ *Burgoo* is of old English vintage.

¹⁴ The Australian use of *wog*, for a germ or parasite, a speck of dirt, any small insect or grub, or (in nursery parlance) a child, is probably from the English dialectal *polliwag* or *polliwig*, a tadpole. In his "Dictionary of Americanisms" (1889) Farmer lists the U.S. use of *polliwog* similarly. Australian nursery elaborations of *wog* include *woggy*, *poggy* (by rhyme), *pog-wog*, *poggy-woggy*, *poggy-wog*, *poglet*, *poggles*, *poggy-pie*, and *poggy-top*, all used as endearments. These introduce a singularly interesting reversion, for *pug* as applied to a child or person was used as an endearment and diminutive in sixteenth-century English. (We find the word surviving in *pug-dog*). The elaborations (above), *pog-wog*, *poggy*, etc., ap-

parently emerged independently, in spite of the fact that Boldrewood, "Ups and Downs" (1878), p. 94, refers to "the *pug-wuggies*, or little people" which would indicate a lengthy Australian association with the expression. Jack Moses, "Nine Miles From Gundagai" (1938) refers to "boot the *woggles* out", meaning "blues" or sad thoughts. C. Barrett, "Coast of Adventure" (1941) gives *wogs* as "a miscellany . . . from bullants to scorpions and centipedes"—a use that is reflected in the "West Australian" (Perth) of 23 May 1942, in which reference is made to "perennial hordes of *wogs*, comprising everything that crawls, hops or flies". The digger use of the word for an Arab is doubtless influenced by these meanings and the old nautical *wog*, a lower-class baboo (Hindoo) shipping clerk.

shelter, especially a *humpy*, and to a hospital bottle for urination, whence, *doover-joe*, a male hospital nurse; *to bat the breeze*, to gossip or talk.

Synonyms for *tropo* include *Malayan madness* (a relic of the ill-fated Malayan campaign), *tropical neurasthenia*, *bloody-mindedness*, *scrub-happiness* and *camp-happiness*.

Other expressions popular among diggers on tropical service have been: *boongs*, aboriginals; *halfies*, half-castes; *creamies*, quarter-castes; *biscuit bombers*, planes which drop supplies and mail in remote areas; *mandrakes*, waterproof capes worn by soldiers in the tropics; *the wog*, malaria; *kai*, food in general; *fanny*, a combination of dagger and knuckle duster; *bushrangers*, guerrilla fighters in the New Guinea jungle and hills.

In an article on army slang in the Melbourne "Argus" of 15 November 1941 G. J. Johnston wrote:

Darwin appears to have the copyright of an interesting use of slang. The captain in charge of the Base Post Office, official Deputy Assistant Director of Posts, is given the Army abbreviation of DAD Posts. He is known everywhere simply as *Dad*, and his assistant, a lieutenant, is *Mum*. They are referred to everywhere by everybody as *Dad* and *Mum*.

Johnston also gave a brief glossary of army slang in his article, among which the following appear to be Australian inventions:

doleys. Soldiers in employment platoons.

February. The Brigadier (seeing him always means 28 days).

fronting the bull. Facing a charge.

glamour gowns. Khaki dress uniforms.

goon stick. A swagger cane carried by officers.

goong session. A yarn after lights out.

hooks. Chevrons.

Mabel. The girl-friend.

nerve war. Grousing or complaining to get things done.

panic hat. A steel helmet.

paper war. Army red tape; departmental files, etc.

promote. To borrow or scrounge something.

skitterbugs. Bren-gun carriers.

snatch your time. To resign from the army, or threaten to leave.

snake pit. The sergeants' mess.

spine bashing. Having a rest; loafing.

stewkeeper. An army cook.

tee up. To make arrangements.

Still more items of digger slang were listed by John Quinn in the Sydney "Sun" on 26 August 1942, some of his additions to the terms already given being: *to fly for the bombo* or *raise*

steam, to engage in a drinking bout; *to go down the track*,¹⁵ a Darwin expression for going on leave in the south; *panic party*, any rush move; *reos*, reinforcements; a *stab*, a medical inoculation; *the mad minute*, bayonet drill; *Tojo*, a Japanese soldier or airman; and *to treat with ignore*, to overrule.

Australians take an intimate interest in the language of their fighting men, and as a result genuine diggerisms find their way into print in a remarkably short time.¹⁶ In spite of this earnest desire to catch up with new slang almost as soon as it is invented, there is still a good deal of material yet to be noted.

For instance, unpopular officers on transports which took our soldiers oversea in the early stages of the war were called *Bight jobs* and *sharkbait*, both obviously implying that such men might be pushed overboard in a convenient stretch of ocean such as the Great Australian Bight. Early in the war a sergeant was a *squeak* and a commanding officer was called *the Trump*. Something disagreeable or objectionable was said to be *on the nose* or *on the trumpet*. A blonde was a *two-bob*, a girl-friend was a *chicky*. Bully-beef was called *camel* and *bullamakau*. Rhubarb was called *after-birth* and custard was *jerk*. The wearisome job of picking up cigarette-butts round a camp was described as *emu bobbing*, *emuing* or *bumper sniping*.¹⁷ *Piastres*, which had already been dubbed *disasters*, acquired a new name in *ackers*. A military prison became known as a *cophouse*, and something notable or extra good was a *gorgonzola*. *Q. bastard* was the nickname given to a quartermaster; *to come the raw prawn over* someone was to take him down.

Here are additional Australian army expressions which serve

¹⁵ The new north-south trans-continental road is always known as *the track*. Whence: *track driver*, the driver of a military truck carrying goods north, and *track happy*, a form of nervous exhaustion often suffered by convoy drivers. The Kokoda trail, New Guinea, is also known as *the track*.

¹⁶ In the April 1942 edition of "Southerly" (Sydney), A. G. Mitchell commenced "A Glossary of War Words", but the great bulk of them were not Australian and, in any case, were rarely used in this country. The only Australianisms given by him were: *brownout*, a partial blackout; *bush artillery*, captured

Italian guns manned by non-combatant ranks at Tobruk; *dingo*, a small reconnaissance tank or armoured car; *drongo*, an R.A.A.F. recruit; *gigglesuit*, a fatigue dress; *retread*, a soldier from the 1914-18 war who enlisted again; and *Tigerschmitt*, an Australian Tiger Moth training plane "by analogy with German *Messerschmitt*".

¹⁷ Towards the end of 1942 the verb *to panic*, meaning to pick up butts and debris round a camp, made its appearance in official orders. With it came *panic nights*, nights set aside for camp clean-ups, and *panicking*, the performance of clean-up duties.

to underline the relish and enthusiasm with which our servicemen have given themselves to word-making:

animal. A term of contempt for a person.

arty. The artillery.

Aussie wuzzies. An Australian carrying party in New Guinea; formed on *fuzzy wuzzies*, as New Guinea natives are known.

balalaika. A Balaclava.

bash, v. To put, do; a verb of exceedingly flexible use, e.g. *ear-bashing*, chattering, *spine-bashing*, loafing, *bash it!* a contemptuous ejaculation, equivalent to *stick it!*

bastardry. Ill-treatment, injustice, anything unpleasant, especially when done at the whim of a superior officer.

bingle. A battle, brawl or drinking party.

blot. The posterior or anus.

blow, v. To go A.W.L.

bludge. A soft job. *Bludger*, a loafer, has exceedingly wide use in the services.

bodger. Worthless, second-rate. (This term is apparently related to English dialect in which *bodge* means to botch or work clumsily.)

brooms bass. A big moustache.

bully beef bomber. A transport or supply plane.

castor. Good, excellent.

canyon. A field gun. (A play on cannon.)

Charley the bastard. The Boys tank attack rifle.

chuff. The backside or anus.

cob it! As for *bash it!* See under *bash*, v.

cock orange. A commanding officer. From the initials C.O.

cow. A girl or sweetheart.

dice, v. To throw away. (Also in civilian use.)

dill. An officer. (From the common use of dill for a simpleton or fool.)

dinger. The anus; also, a batman. The use of *dingbat* for a batman was noted earlier.

done over. Wounded, injured.

dorothy. Any plate or container from which food is eaten. (Perhaps by rhyming slang from *Dorothy Gish*, a dish.)

trongo. Second-rate, worthless.

trube. A term of contempt for a person.

ighting. Working.

lipper. An incompetent.

ust. An anal escape of wind.

alah. A simple-minded soldier.

as producer. A respirator.

ay. An officer. See *dill*.

ive the game away. To become disgusted with Service life. Also, *give it to the blacks*.

o through. To go A.W.L.

alf-bulled. Drunk.

o-ho-ho. A popular chant, imitating the barking of dogs, originated by the Ninth Division; especially used as a form of protest.

omer. A wound sufficiently serious to cause a man to be sent home. *To head them* (a term taken from two-up) is to get such a wound.

apan man. A Japanese. (Taken from New Guinea pidgin English.)

- jeep*. A gun position officer. From the initials G.P., with American antecedents.
- jungle juice*. Any alcoholic beverage concocted by servicemen in the tropics.
- kai lines*. Food queues.
- Lady Blamey*. A beer bottle, from which the neck has been removed, used as a drinking vessel.
- laugh*. To complain, growl; especially used in the form *stop laughing*, stop complaining.
- lurk men*. Loafers, dodgers.
- Middle Easter*. A soldier who served in the Mediterranean war zone.
- milk run*. A lone raid or a reconnaissance run by an enemy plane.
- munga*. Food. Whence, *hard munga*, iron rations, *soft munga*, normal rations or civilian food.
- no-hoper*. A hard case, a devil-may-care man.
- no-mater*. A term of contempt for a person; a toady, one unfit for friendship.
- on your back, they're*. They (usually officers) are overworking you, demanding too much.
- panic man*. An excitable soldier.
- padder*. A padre.
- peanut*. A simple-minded soldier.
- peanuts? how are these*. A cant phrase, usually employed in exasperation, like the phrase *wouldn't it!*
- pelican*. As for *peanut*.
- photo Joe*. A single enemy reconnaissance plane or raider.
- priority 1 job*. Anything important.
- punish*. To reprove, tell off, overwork. Whence, *punisher*, an officer who makes excessive demands on his men.
- rail, over the*. To vomit, not necessarily at sea.
- sewing-machine Charley*. A single enemy reconnaissance plane or raider.
- shoftee-scope*. A telescope or binoculars.
- skull, v.* To strike (someone).
- spine-drill*. Loafing, resting.
- swish*. Absent without leave.
- throw (someone)*. To talk one's way out of trouble, especially with a superior officer.
- woodpecker*. A Japanese .77 machine-gun.
- zebra*. An N.C.O. (From the arm chevrons.)
- zombie*. A soldier who acts as though he is half dead. (From *zombie*, a name given to "the walking dead".)

On the home front the restless Australian urge to sprinkle new terms over our speech was also active. It produced *blacketeers*¹⁸ for people who deal in black markets, *white market* for legitimate trade, *black market betting* for off-course betting on horse-races, with its derivatives *black marketeers*, *ebony marketeers*, *black boys* and *boongs*, for off-course bookmakers; *brownout*

¹⁸ Australian terms with similar suffixes are *budgeteers*, people who handle a domestic budget, *munitioneers*, munition workers, *brown Muscateers*, drinkers of muscat, *divoteers*,

golfers, *infanteers*, foot soldiers, *rocketeers*, persons who are interested in rocket propulsion for war weapons and travel.

romeos,¹⁹ men who molest women and girls in darkened streets; *jungle juice*, poor quality petrol; *jillaroo*, a land girl²⁰; *Wausie*,²¹ a female member of the Services; and a string of expressions to describe a type of throat complaint current among soldiers in camp—*Brighton throat* (Tasmania), *Ingleburn throat* (New South Wales), *Puckapunyal* and *Pucka throat* (Victoria), *Woodside throat* (South Australia) and *Redbank throat* (Queensland). These were names of various military camps. In New Zealand the same infection was known as the *Burnham bug*.

The arrival of American servicemen in Australia produced *Yankee cream*, taxi-drivers' slang for highly lucrative returns from U.S. fares, *Yank happy*, a reaction from the first enthusiasm with which U.S. troops were welcomed, *unit girl*, a girl of loose morals who is passed on from one member of a Service unit to another as they go on leave, *Yank boong*, an American negro. We acquired a new term in *Brisbane Line*, a strategic line of defence, running from slightly north of Brisbane to north of Adelaide, to which it was intended to retire if the Japanese had forced an invasion of Australia early in 1942. The children began playing new games—*Hess and Hitler*, *Commandos* and *Japanese Round Up*. Of the last-named game, a newspaper noted:

Apparently the Aussies and Yanks (boys) can claim "barley" if they can get to a certain place. But the Japs (girls) have no "barley". All they get is cuts and bruises. The rules don't allow them to hit back.

Journalists invented *Umbrella Regulations*, for the National Security Regulations, "which cover everything", *Penemy*, a person who betrays military secrets in a letter, *zoot suit* (which, of course, came originally from U.S. jive slang) for the crude civilian clothes given to discharged servicemen, *latch-key kids* for children left at home on their own by mothers engaged in war industry, *Corset Commandos* and *Corset Quota Catchers*, for women who rushed to buy declining stocks of corsets. Preparations for air raids produced a rash of "alphabeticisms"—*N.E.S.*, National Emergency Services, *C.D.F.*, Civil Defence Force, *C.D.C.*, Civil Defence Council, *C.D.L.*, Civil Defence Legion, *S.E.S.*, State Emergency Services.

Other Australian alphabeticisms linked with war are: *A.I.F.*,

¹⁹ The use of *brownout* both as a noun and a verb seems to have been originally Australian, current from 1941. Derivative forms were *browned out* and *browning out*.

²⁰ The word is created from association with *jackeroo*.

²¹ An extension of *Aussie*.

Australian Imperial Forces, *A.C.F.*, Australian Comforts Fund, *A.M.F.*, Australian Military Forces, *A.A.M.W.S.*, Australian Army Medical Women's Service, *A.W.A.S.*, Australian Women's Army Service (called the *Ar-wars*), *A.W.C.*, Allied Works Council, *C.C.C.*, Civil Constructional Corps, *C.M.F.*, Citizens' Military Forces (the Militia), *R.A.A.F.*, Royal Australian Air Force, *R.A.A.F.N.S.*, Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service, *R.A.N.*, Royal Australian Navy, *R.A.N.N.S.*, Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service, *V.D.C.*, Volunteer Defence Corps, *W.A.A.A.F.*, Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (called *Waffs* or *Woffs*)²², *W.A.F.S.*, Women's Air Force Services, *W.A.S.P.S.*, Women's Agricultural Security Production Service, *W.R.A.N.S.*, Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (called *Wrans* or *Rons*).

Although they are slightly outside the ambit of this work the following verbal accompaniments to army bugle calls of various types should be of interest:²³

Reveille. Get out of bed, get out of bed, you lazy blighters!

Parade. Fall in A; fall in B; fall in every companee.

Cookhouse. Come to the cookhouse door, boys, come to the cookhouse door.

When you see the sergeant-cook smile, come to the cookhouse door.

Post. Letters from Lousy Lou. Letters from Lousy Lou. Letters for you and letters for me and letters from Lousy Lou.

Defaulters. You can be a defaulter as long as you like, as long as you answer your name.

Retreat. You won't go to heaven when you die, Mary Ann. No, you won't, no, you won't, Mary Ann.

Pay Parade. Swinging the lead, boys, swinging the lead, always remember to work your head.

4.—AIR FORCE AND NAVY

Members of the Royal Australian Air Force have not as yet made a deep impression upon our slang, although they are certain to do so in course of time. A great deal of their jargon has been inherited from England where the R.A.F. has proved extraordinarily fertile—as well as fickle—in its concoction of new terms. However, Australianisms are beginning to appear more frequently and are more than holding their own with imported vernacular. Here is a brief list of indigenous Air Force slang:

beef it, to. To turn tail, make off.

bird. An aeroplane (see *nest*).

²² A barracks or centre where these women live is a *Waafery* or *Woffery*.

²³ Published in "Salt", 24 November 1941.

blear, to. To fly about when lost, seeking a landmark.

blind stabbing. Blind flying.

bosey. A single bomb dropped from a plane. (In cricket parlance a *bosey* is a googly ball.)

capstan. A plane on the secret list; used originally to denote Spitfires, which were brought secretly to Australia at the end of 1942.

chopper. A Tomahawk aeroplane.

do a penang. To turn tail, run away.

drongo. A raw recruit.

emus. Ground staff. (Obsolescent.)

flaming a——hole. The large red circle painted on the side of a Japanese plane.

flying a——hole. An observer.

Foo. A fictitious person to whom all lapses and bungling are attributed. (The term became general slang in 1942. A derivative is *Fooism*, an exploit or saying attributed to *Foo*.)

googly. As for *bosey*.

go through, to. To desert (from a northern base to the south).

grasshopping. Flying low to beat anti-aircraft fire.

Great Brown Bomber. A Lockheed Hudson plane.

grid. A flight of planes in formation.

in the cactus. In trouble.

jockey. A pilot.

lift your undercarriage! Get out! Go away!

Little Brown Man. A Japanese (not, be it noted, Little Yellow Man!).

moth balls. Tracer bullets.

nest. An aerodrome (where *birds* congregate).

peasant. An ordinary rank.

pig. An officer.

pongo. An Englishman.

pot. A cylinder.

put the cleaners through. To take down (a person).

rouseabouts. Ground staff.

snakes. A sergeant.

snarler. A man sent back from overseas for some misdemeanour. (From SNLR, Services No Longer Required. Also used by the A.I.F.)

sprog. An ordinary rank. Whence: *chief sprog*, the Warrant Officer Engineering; *chief sproggery*, the place where N.C.Os in charge of flights meet to discuss general plans. (Probably from dialectal *sprug*, a sparrow, via the Australian version *sprog* or *sproggy*.)

wags. Signallers.

Whirling Spray. A Wirraway plane.

Woe. Warrant Officer Engineering.

Wog. Warrant Officer Gunnery.

yow, to keep. To act as an observer.

yike. A dogfight.

zoomer. Any member of an air crew.

It will be seen that some of these are adaptations of terms used in other Australian fields, but that fact does not rob them of their interest. When R. G. Menzies was Prime Minister mem-

bers of the R.A.A.F. were known to some sections of the public as *Menzies' mannequins* or *Menzies' emus*; later when J. Curtin became Prime Minister they were called *Curtin's cowboys*. The use of *Daffodil* for an R.A.A.F. man—a variation on the English theme of *Blue Orchid* for an airman—also appears to be indigenous. It was also applied for a period to members of the A.I.F. Armoured Division at Puckapunyal camp, Victoria.

Few jargons are more world-wide in their application and use than the slang of naval men. It has penetrated to all corners of the globe and, as a result, we cannot expect a particularly large selection of new terms from the Australian sailor. It is not that navy slang is meagre—rather the reverse—but that Australian and English naval traditions are closely akin, and few English traditions are kept more rigidly than those of her navy. As a result the Australian sailor uses a good deal of the slang that comes easily to the lips of the English sailor. He is not, however, overwhelmed by it, for new experiences and new ways of life bring inevitably in their train new expressions.

Matapan stew is one of these expressions. It describes a stew made of a multiplicity of odds and ends in the way of meat and vegetables, and commemorates, as we would expect, the Battle of Matapan. Working under fire, the cooks of H.M.A.S. *Perth* first made *Matapan stew* on 28 March 1941.

The *Tobruk ferry* is another historical expression belonging to World War No. 2. It was applied to Australian destroyers running from Alexandria, Egypt, to Tobruk during the historic Tobruk siege.

Additional references to events and places in which the Australian navy has special interest will be seen in the following glossary:

alberts. Sea boots (from *Prince Alberts* or *toe-rags* worn by tramps).

bang bag. A cordite case.

bang box. A six-inch gun-turret.

barking belly. A four-inch anti-aircraft gun.

Battleship Corner. Princes Bridge and Flinders Street stations, Melbourne.

beagle. An officers' steward.

bish. A ship's chaplain.

body snatcher. An R.A.N. surgeon keen on performing operations on seamen.

boy scout's leave. Shore leave requiring return on shipboard before 10 p.m.

bumped. (Of a ship) torpedoed; hit by a shell or bomb.

burn. A cigarette. *Twist a burn*, to roll a cigarette.

button tosser. A radio telegraphist (formed on the English slang *bunting tosser*, a signalman).

- uzz merchant*. A rumour spreader. (*Buzz*, a rumour, is in English service slang.)
- .G.I.* (also *Corticene Grabber's Itch*). A desire to throw oneself on the deck during a dive-bombing attack.
- uptain of the head*. A sailor detailed to clean lavatories.
- usa*. A masher (from *casanova*).
- harley raft*. A Carley float.
- harley's coat*. A Carley float.
- harlies*. Sailors in general.
- hicky, chook* or *chooky*. A girl or sweetheart.
- 'hicken Run*. The main path in Hyde Park, Sydney, where sailors meet their girl friends or pick up casual acquaintances.
- hippy*. A shipwright.
- hook*. A defaulter or prisoner.
- hute, to*. To throw away.
- obbseybash*. A friend or mate (apparently a play on *cobber*).
- oiler, curler*. A cigarette.
- ook's lost hope*. A heavy steamed duff.
- orner, the*. Garden Island naval prison, Sydney.
- rash*. To sleep.
- lepót stanchion*. A draft dodger at a naval depôt.
- lidah*. A radio telegraphist.
- lig out*. (As an order) Help yourself!
- limple*. A hole in a ship's hull caused by a torpedo.
- lit*. A yarn, story (from *ditty*).
- Domain dawdler*. A sailor who frequents the Sydney Domain with the object of picking up casual feminine acquaintance.
- loss bag*. A hammock.
- iouble, the*. Sentences of second class for conduct and second class for leave meted out as punishment to a sailor.
- train the bilge*. To be badly seasick.
- luser*. A cigarette end (i.e. "do for after").
- agle*. A Stuka dive-bomber.
- ats bosun*. Chief cook.
- flatterback*. The wearing of one's cap on the back of one's head.
- frog's eyes*. Tapioca.
- gash*. A second helping of food.
- George Street sack*. A girl who meets her sailor friend, or who makes a casual acquaintance with a sailor, in George Street, Sydney.
- G.I.* Garden Island.
- gip* (or *G.I.P.*). Garden Island naval prison.
- goffer*. A drink of beer. (In English naval slang it is used for mineral water or for a seller of mineral water or lemonade aboard ship.)
- gumleaf sailor*. A rating on shore duty.
- gut spiller*. A Gurkha soldier.
- hammer*. The penis.
- have a run*. To get drunk, go on a spree.
- howling box*. A gas chamber (from the effects of tear gas).
- Hyde Parker*. A sailor who frequents Hyde Park, Sydney, in search of feminine company.
- Ities' guts, to have*. To be cowardly.
- Jacka*. H.M.A.S. *Ajax*.
- Jack Strop*. A new recruit who tries to pass himself off as an old hand.

- Johnny's*. Any doss-house for servicemen.
- joss man*. A master-at-arms or jonty.
- kellick*. A leading hand. (Among fishermen *kellick* is used for a weight, often a stone, tied to a rope for mooring a boat; whence *kellick*, v., to moor a boat with a *kellick*.)
- macaroon*. A new rating (also *maca* or *macker*).
- Maltese holiday*. A heavy air raid.
- mine-swept area*. The main city area of a port. Here the word *mine* indicates girls in general.
- molly*. A malingerer.
- mucko*. A sailor.
- napper*. A member of the Naval Auxiliary Patrol.
- nudged*. (Of a ship) slightly damaged by bomb, shell or torpedo.
- off-cap*, v. To be a defaulter.
- on the patch*. In trouble, on the carpet.
- oony*. Seasick.
- perm*. A permanent member of the navy.
- pigs*. Officers.
- plonker*. A bad mood.
- projie*. A projectile.
- pump packing*. Tough steak.
- pusser*. That which conforms to naval regulations; e.g. *pusser's waggon*, a warship; *pusser's duck*, a seaplane; *pusser's cow*, tinned milk; *pusser's rig*, naval clothes.
- rabbit*. An article made by a sailor at sea as a gift to a friend or girl. As verb, to scrounge.
- ringer*. An officer.
- sack*. A casual feminine acquaintance.
- Saturday afternoon sailor*. A naval reservist.
- slug*. The penis.
- snake-pit*. The bar in Royal Naval House, Sydney.
- sprog*. A youngster; hence a young recruit. The air force use of this term has already been noted.
- squarie*. A girl friend.
- straight striper*. A permanent member of the navy.
- stray*. A sausage.
- swottie*. A soldier.
- tank*. A hammock.
- Taswegian*. A Tasmanian sailor.
- tiddle*. Not according to naval regulations; the opposite of *pusser* (q.v.).
- twirly*. A cigarette.
- uppers*. Loafers (i.e. on the upper deck).
- wet (as a scrubber)*. Extremely stupid.
- winger*. A comrade, cobbler.
- woof run*. A restaurant.

CHAPTER IX

PASTIMES AND PLEASURES

1.—DRINKING

As enthusiastic but not particularly intelligent drinkers Australians have always been willing to persuade themselves that they are reckless addicts of alcohol. They have heard so much of the old rum days, of the vast thirsts acquired by diggers during the gold rushes,¹ of wild life in outback shanties, and of the enthusiasm with which the average Australian regards a pot of beer, that the picture has been clouded by prejudice. In terms of world consumption we are mild drinkers. Official comparisons in the "Commonwealth Year Book" show that when the Australian was drinking 8.2 gallons of beer a year, the average American was drinking 13 gallons and the average Englishman 33.1 gallons. Nor do we drink as much whisky, rum or other spirits as Americans. The averages were: 0.2 gallons a head in Australia and England, 0.9 gallons in the United States.

Furthermore, we smoke less—for every 2 pounds we smoke, the average Englishman smokes 3 pounds and the average American 6 pounds.

So the vices of which our wowsers are fond of complaining are by no means as significant as they have been made out to be.

It was not always so, however. In 1819, for instance, G. W. Evans² wrote that *grog fever* was "the only prevailing disease in the colony" of Van Diemen's Land. Nearly seventy years later R. E. N. Twopeny³ weighed in with this grim picture:

The quantity of spirits drunk in Australia is appalling . . . And what about drunkenness? Statistically it is not very much worse than England, but the

¹ Of those days a writer in 1857 used the expression *colonial disease* to describe "the human rot arising from the excessive use of ardent spirits".

² "A Description of Van Diemen's Land".

³ "Town Life in Australia" (1883).

difference lies in the class who get drunk. Here it is not merely the lower classes, but everybody that drinks. Not a few of the wealthiest and most leading citizens are well-known to be frequently drunk, though their names do not, of course, appear in the papers or in the police reports. The state of public feeling on the subject, though improving, is much as it was in England twenty or thirty years ago. Society says, "Capital fellow, Jones; pity he drinks!" but no social reprobation attaches to Jones.

The public attitude may not have changed greatly in the past half-century, but the point to be stressed is this: If drunkenness appears to be prevalent in Australia, it is not because of our excessive drinking but because of our insane licensing laws which make people drink hurriedly and in discomfort; which make hotel bars places for guzzling liquor in haste and not places where men can sit down and drink leisurely; which give men half an hour or an hour at the most between the time they cease their day's work and the time hotels are closed; which send them out into the streets clutching a quart of fortified wine so that a bad job can be finished off quickly with even worse results.

I mention these points because they are reflected in some measure in our drinking vocabulary. There is a heavy accent on expressions for types of liquor which no educated drinker, in reasonable possession of leisure and his faculties, would think of consuming.

Australia is capable of producing excellent wines, yet of these the average member of the public knows nothing. At the best his acquaintance usually extends no further than port, sherry and muscat—heavy drinks, often fortified,⁴ sold cheaply, an easy means of getting drunk quickly and at a minimum of expense.

Here is a group of indigenous terms used to describe cheap wines: *Africa speaks*,⁵ *bombo*,⁶ *Clever Mary*,⁷ *corrobbery water*,

⁴ Evidence that the Australian's ignorance of good wines is of long standing may be perceived in this comment by a writer in the "Bulletin" of 21 January 1882, when dealing with "the Sydney acceptance of the term *sherry*": "The greater part of the sherry out here [i.e. in Australia] is composed of methylated spirits, furniture polish and rosin." An exaggeration almost certainly, but not without some foundation in fact.

⁵ Possibly related to *on the tiger*, engaged in a drinking bout. The U.S. *blind tiger* and *blind pig*, a sly grog shop, may be noted.

⁶ Perhaps related to the aboriginal *bombo*, thunder, but more likely from the eighteenth-century *bumbo* or *bombo*, a drink made of rum, sugar and water.

⁷ From the name of a well-known household cleanser, "because after drinking it a man goes home and cleans up the house"!

*ink, lunatic soup, nelly, nelly's death, paint, plonk,*⁸ *plink* (described as cheap plonk), *red, red Ned,*⁹ *scarlet runner* and *steam*.

And here are some drinks in which methylated spirits features: *bidgee,*¹⁰ *pinky, Fitzroy cocktail, Domain cocktail, Domain special* and *white lady*.

There are other methylated spirits concoctions which do not seem to have well-defined names. Here is a group of recipes as published by an outback newspaper in 1936:

- (a) Methylated spirits, cloves and a little camphor.
- (b) Methylated spirits, ginger beer and a teaspoon of bootpolish. (This is the *Fitzroy* or *Domain cocktail*. In Queensland a mixture of methylated spirits, tan bootpolish and/or bluestone is called *banyan rum*.)
- (c) Methylated spirits and Condyl's crystals. (*Pinky*.)
- (d) Methylated spirits, water and cayenne pepper.
- (e) Methylated spirits and ammonia. (*White lady*.)
- (f) Methylated spirits, ginger ale and benzine.
- (g) Methylated spirits and cheap wine (half and half), tablespoon bootpolish, raisins, a little sugar and water; tobacco if desired to make extra "tasty" and quick acting.¹¹ (*Bidgee*.)

Addicts of these noxious drinks are known as *meths, methos, metho artists* and *pinkeyes*.

Drunks in general are known in Australian parlance as *beer swipers, booze artists, booze hounds, booze kings, boozicians,*¹² *boozingtons,*¹³ *caterpillars, leanaways, slurks, tids, swippingtons,*¹⁴ *jobs, shicks* and *shickers*.

A man who is drunk is said to be *blithered, blue, on his ear, full as a goog, egg, tick* or *State school, half-rinsed, inked, inkipoo, mastok, out to it, paralytic,*¹⁵ *pinko, shick, shickered, stung, shot full of holes, drunk as a bastard, drunk as Chloe,*¹⁶ *drunk as an owl* or *fowl*, and *drunk as a piss ant*.

Dingbats for delirium tremens is also Australian.

One of the first glossaries of Australian drinking slang was

⁸ Apparently originally a digger corruption of *vin blanc*. Another corruption of similar type, noted by Downing in "Digger Dialects" was *nazonk*, for *mademoiselle*.

⁹ English slang has *red biddy* for heap red wine.

¹⁰ See previous footnote.

¹¹ "There's a good deal of to-kacky in the grog these fellows sell," remarks a character in Boldrewood's *Ups and Downs*" (1878).

¹² Formed on the U.S. *mortician, fruitician*, etc.

¹³ Formed on the old English *lushington*.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁵ In English slang from 1910, says Partridge. Recorded in Australia in 1890.

¹⁶ The origin is obscure. Perhaps simply by rhyme from the English *drunk as Floey*.

collected by F. Fowler in 1859¹⁷ and although a good deal of it has long been obsolete it is worth recalling. Here is his list:

Catherine Hayes.¹⁸ Claret, sugar and nutmeg.

Lola Montez.¹⁹ Rum, ginger, lemon and hot water.

Madame Bishop.²⁰ Port, sugar and nutmeg. (*Bishop* was in English use for a warm drink of wine, with sugar and orange or lemon juice.)

constitutional. Gin and bitters.

maiden. Peppermint or cloves.

sensation. A half-glass of sherry.

smash. Brandy, ice and water.

spider. Brandy and lemonade. (Now current for a drink of ice-cream and lemonade. Often *Gunn's Gully spider*.)

Band of Hope. Lemon syrup.

Stone fence. Ginger beer and brandy. (An 1850 definition was given as ale and ginger beer.)

Nobbler for a small drink of beer, spirits or wine also came into prominence in those times, being first recorded in 1852. A nobbler is defined under National Security Regulations as one-fifth of a gill, or one ounce, but it is not defined in the Weights and Measures Act. The word acquired verbal forms *to nobblerize* (1864) and *nobblerizing* (1868). Morris suggests that it is derived from "that which nobbles or gets hold of you".

Some more old terms which have more or less become defunct are *colonial*, *colonial tangle*, *jerrawicke*, *she-oak*²¹ and *squirt* for beer. According to legend beer originally made with artesian water at Sale, Gippsland, was called *artesian*, but it is doubtful whether such beer would have been fit to drink.

Additional terms for beer include: *sheep wash*, *stringybark*,²² *shearer's joy*, *ketchup* and *catch up*, and *shypoo*. The last is a Westralian word, which also appears in *shypoo joint*, a hotel. It has developed in eastern States to *shypook*, a sly-grog shop, and in North Queensland to *shaboo shop*, a hotel.

To fetch beer from a hotel is *to run the rabbit*, the word

¹⁷ Published in "Southern Lights and Shadows".

¹⁸ A noted figure of the stage.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ D. M. Gane, "New South Wales and Victoria" (1886) said that a *she-oak net* was "a life preserving net which Victorian authorities have thought it wise to have slung under the gangways of every ship which is

moored to the Melbourne wharves". The association is, of course, with the beer. The New Zealand use of *titoki* for a shandygaff has probably been affected by the Australian *she-oak*. Both the *she-oak* and *titoki* are trees.

²² Also applied to bad whisky in the 1880s, a writer of the period giving the recipe as "fusil oil and turpentine".

bbit sometimes being used to describe a bottle of beer. In the Northern Territory a bottle of beer is called a *black shirt*.

Strong drink is known variously as *jollop*, *fixing*, *panther's* —*s*, *shellshock*, *snakejuice*, and *stagger-juice*.

Illicit whisky, as made in stills in bush areas, is known as *mountain dew*. This is a variation of the Standard English use of the term for genuine Scotch whisky. It is also used in America. *Southerly buster* is the name given to a mixed drink in which whisky features; a *nor'-wester* is a stiff drink of brandy; a *barmaid's blush* or *maiden's blush* is described as either a drink of port and lemonade or a drink of rum and raspberry.

Some minor dispute exists whether *John Collins*, a drink of lemon, soda-water, sugar, lemon and ice, is originally American or Australian. The first printed use of the expression was, according to the "Oxford Dictionary", in the "Australasian" of 19 February 1865. H. L. Mencken claims it as definitely American and says that the original Collins, a barman, has been traced, which makes any further claim on Australia's behalf difficult to sustain.

Australians have a fair selection of terms to describe drinking and drinking bouts, such as a *beer-up*, *booze-up*, *break-out*, *unk-up*, *jamberoo*,²³ *jollo*, *perisher*, *shivoo*,²⁴ *shivaroo*, *to go on the scoot* (or *on the squiff*, *stun* or *a tank*), *to tip the little finger*, *to swamp* (to spend money on liquor) and *to bash the turps*.

Our interest in beer is also disclosed by the comprehensive list of expressions we have for various sizes of beer drinks. The *lall wave*, *war cry*, *sleever*,²⁵ *long sleeve*, *long sleeved 'un*, *deep drinker*, *butcher*, *jar* and *spinnaker* are all descriptive of largelasses of *schooner*²⁶ proportions, and most of them have been current for more than half a century. *Butcher* is Adelaide slang; in the early days it was used for a glass containing about two-thirds of a pint. In modern times the size has dropped to about half a pint.

Another old term, this time associated with Sydney, was *shop Barker*, also used for a large glass of beer. The "Bulletin" of 9 January 1892 defined it as the largest drink of beer obtainable, and derived it from the tallness of Primate Barker who was consecrated to the Sydney See in 1854.

²³ A local adaptation of the U.S. *hiboree*.

²⁴ From the French *chez vous*.

²⁵ From English dialect wherein

it signified a drink of about three-quarters of a pint of beer.

²⁶ This was originally U.S. slang.

The *middy*, a beer glass containing nine ounces, is a measure used only in N.S.W. hotels.

Lady's waist (Sydney) and *pixie* (Melbourne) for a small glass of beer also appear to be Australian originals. So do *breakdown*, a small measure of spirits, *alleviator*, any drink of liquor, a *friendly pannikin*, a drink with a companion, and *coupla*, popular expression to describe two or more drinks. A wartime invention was *Lady Blamey*, for an improvised drinking vessel made from a beer bottle with the neck cut off, named after the wife of General Sir Thomas Blamey.

When Morris's "Austral English" came under review, the "Bulletin" of 18 December 1897 noted that while the author had provided the note, "In Australia, the word *inn* is now rare, the word *hotel* has supplanted it", he had included no mention of the *pub*, which, said the "Bulletin", "is practically the only bush term in current use". The fact that *pub* is in wide Australian use does not, however, make it indigenous; it was originally English. But we have obviously taken it to heart since the forms *rubby*, *rubbity*, and *rubberdy*, a hotel, have all come from *pub*, via the rhyme *rub-a-dub-dub*.

One of the most important institutions of early outback days was the *bush shanty*, often a tumbledown hut where liquor was sold illegally. It owed a good deal of its early prosperity to gold rush days, and from it was derived the verb *to shanty*, to drink habitually at a public house. *Shanty-keeper* is recorded in 1875.

Sly-grog, for liquor sold illegally, is also Australian, as are its derivatives *sly-grog shop*, *sly-groggery*, *sly-grog seller* and *sly-grogger*.

Two more expressive terms for outback drinking dens were *poison shop* and *lambing down shop*. *To lamb down* meant to spend money lavishly on drink or to encourage such lavish spending, the latter being a practice in which some shanty-keepers (they were also called *lambers down*) frequently indulged. Before railways were built and when towns were difficult to reach, many a bushman went to a bush pub with a cheque that represented a year's wages or a bag of gold that had taken months to collect. He would hand this across the bar and tell the publican to inform him when it was finished. He would then be blind drunk for several days—or weeks—after which the publican would tell him that his cheque was exhausted and

turn him out. The man was said to have been *lambled down* by the publican.

The last act of *knocking down* a cheque was what Boldrewood described in "The Crooked Stick" (1895) as "a rather old-fashioned bush pleasantry", to *jump one's horse over the bar*. This was done when the drinker, after exhausting his cheque, mortgaged or sold his horse to the publican. When this ritual had been observed the only thing left to do was for the bushman to *take water*—to leave the hotel penniless.

In the days when sons of well-to-do squatters and their companions were known as *greenhides*, the practice of jumping a horse over a bar was often put to literal effect, these bush larrikins considering it excellent sport to smash up the interior of a bar and then pay for it.

To *tie up a dog* or to *chain up a pup* are other phrases of wide rural use. They mean "to obtain drinks on credit". As a result, an unpaid score is called a *mad dog* or it is said that *the dogs are barking*.

Here is portion of an advertisement inserted in the Bathurst "National Advocate" in 1937 by a licensee who was leaving his hotel:

He particularly requests that all dogs tied up at the hotel be released. This reservation specially applies to Kelpies, Alsations and other large breeds.

The reference was solely to drinking debts.

To *put the lid on* is to close a hotel; a *jerrydiddle* is a drink on the house; to consume liquor is to *get a drink across one's chest*; *rozner* is a stiff pick-me-up.

The pronounced Australian desire to be a good fellow with all and sundry, to be a "sport", has probably had a considerable influence on the development of that useful institution, the *shout*. The verb *to shout* first came into use in gold rush days. It was obviously derived from shouting for attention at a bar. Within a short time it had developed into a noun, the original *shout* being a drink that was purchased for another person. In the past eighty-odd years we have put the term to many uses that are not associated with the original drinking sense. For instance, we can *shout* a friend to the pictures, or *shout* him a packet of cigarettes, and in both cases we can do so without expecting anything in return. *Shouter*, *shoutee* and *shouting* are natural derivatives.

We have many versions of the shout, such as the *American*

shout, *Yankee shout* (we also call it a *Yank* or *Yankee*), *Scotch shout*, *Chinaman's shout* and *Dutch shout*, the last, of course, being an Australian version of the English *Dutch treat*. The cant phrase, *going to shout?* used as a greeting, can also be noted.

To sneeze, to bowl someone, to carry the mail and *to stand one's hand* all mean to stand treat. A *captain* is a man who is lavish in shouting for others, and a *dry hash* (now obsolete) or *Jimmy Woodser* is a man who declines to shout and prefers to indulge in what the Australians regard as a highly objectionable habit—*drinking with the flies*.²⁷

Jimmy Woodser is an interesting Australianism about which there has been a good deal of guesswork and theory and little conclusive evidence. There was not, for instance, a man named Jimmy Woods who became renowned for his lone drinking habits.²⁸ But there was, according to a record of about 1882,²⁹ an old Sydney expression *Johnny Warder* used for "an idle drunkard who hangs about pub corners looking for a drink (called after a publican named John Ward who formerly kept a low house in Sydney noted for that species)".

This may explain why we sometimes have the alternative form, *Johnny Woodser*.

In the "Bulletin" of 9 August 1902 a staff writer offers the following note to explain the term:

One yarn is that some Jimmy Woods used to always drink by himself; another that a man wanting to drink by himself asked an imaginary Jimmy Woods to come and drink with him.

These are more in the nature of stories concocted after the event than genuine explanations.

A *Jimmy Woodser* is not only a lone drinker, but also a drink consumed by such a person. We have extended the expression into figurative uses. Thus, in his book of poems, "Nine Miles from Gundagai", Jack Moses calls rain that fails to fall during drought a *Jimmy Woodser* and at another place he calls an early morning plunge in the ocean a *Jimmy Woodser*.

A synonym Australia has forgotten is *Jack Smithers* which was used, especially in outback Queensland, during the 1890s

²⁷ The Hungarian proverb *Ökör iszik magában*, "only an ox drinks alone", has something of the same feeling about it.

²⁸ This in spite of the fact that in the "Bulletin" of 7 May 1892 there appears a poem by B. H.

Boake entitled "Jimmy Wood" and at the end there is a footnote: "A man who drinks by himself is said to *take a Jimmy Woodser*".

²⁹ "The Australian Slang Dictionary" (anon).

for a lone drinker. The origin is again obscure. *To go Ballarat* was another expression with the same meaning current half a century ago.

In the "Bulletin" of 2 July 1892 a writer noted:

A *Jimmy Woodser* may mean a solitary drink (or a solitary drinker) in some places, a *Jack Smithers* in others, but in the western district of Victoria if a man takes a drink by himself, he is said to *go Ballarat*.

Just as the *shout* is an institution in this part of the world so are the *bob in*, *two bob in*, *chuck in*, *Kentucky*, *Tambaroora muster* and a few other variations on the theme, all of which concern the creation of a jack-pot, usually with the object of buying drinks. The *Tambaroora*—taken from the name of an eastern township—dates from the early 1880s. The idea behind these expressions, as behind the *Yankee shout* and others listed earlier, is that everyone pays for himself.

Bar games which also have as their object the creation of a jack-pot—although they allow the winner to pocket a surplus—are *up-and-down*, *Yankee grab* and the *Hokitika swindle*, the last of which hails from New Zealand.

Indigenous toasts are: *here's looking up your kilts! here's lead in your pencil! down the gully!* and *here's to 'ee* (the last taken from an advertising slogan used by the makers of Toohey's beer, Sydney).

And to conclude this section, here are a few general expressions in our drinking vocabulary: *gigglestick*, a stick or spoon used to stir a mixed alcoholic drink; *hip disease*, the practice of carrying a flask of liquor in one's hip pocket; *alcoholic constipation*, an inveterate taste for liquor, inability to "pass" a hotel; *three or four point drinker*, a man "who calls for a 6d. gin with bitters, limejuice and soda"³⁰; and *here it is!* or *it!* an effectively simple sign, of obvious import to the initiated, to be seen in many Australian bars.

2.—RACES AND BETTING

The Cup, run in Melbourne (in pre-war days) on the first Tuesday of each November, is an annual fanaticism upon which a national daily once saw fit to comment:

The unique quality of the Melbourne Cup is its national significance. No other event in Australian life so perfectly sums us up—our love of the out-

³⁰ The definition is from the "U.L.V.A. Review", 15 August 1938.

doors, our love of sport, our capacity for enjoying ourselves wholeheartedly and healthily. Technically the Cup is run over a few flat furlongs near Melbourne. Actually it is run across the heart of the Australian people.

From the world of the racing fan it is natural that we should be able to cull a few lingual crumbs.

For instance, we have an earlier use of *book* and *bookie* for bookmaker from England. *Book* was in Australian use in 1881—it is from the English slang *book*, the bets taken or the betting book in which they are noted. *Bookie* is to be found in 1884, a year earlier than the "Oxford Dictionary's" first textual record.

Bagswingers, *bookie boys* or *bookie bhoys* and *tommies* are synonyms popular in sporting journals; *Ikey* and *Ikey Mo* were used similarly during the closing decades of last century.

Fraudulent bookmakers of one kind and another are known as *balancers*, *besters*, *crushers*, *guy-a-whack bookmakers* and *johnnycake bookmakers* (the last two are obsolescent), and, of 1942 vintage, *bootleg bookmakers*. Here is a quotation from the Sydney "Telegraph" of 29 December 1941 showing that there are other varieties of the species:

There are *medical* bookmakers, *egg* bookmakers, and *nothing under* bookmakers. You've all heard their answers when you go up to price a horse.

The *medical* bookmaker says, "You'll get better."

The *egg* man says, "I've laid that."

The *nothing under* bookmaker is the one who won't accept a bet of less than 10/-

Important in the Australian's racing vocabulary is *S.P.*, or starting price business, which has given us a number of expressions, such as *S.P. book*, *S.P. joint*, *S.P. betting*. Wartime inventions for off-course transactions include *bootleg betting* and *black market betting*.

The *crusher* has already been mentioned. A *crush bet* is a method of betting whereby a backer ensures himself against loss. For instance, if he takes £7 to £1 about a horse and then lays £4 to £1 he will have £3 to nothing. *Crush betting* was declared illegal in Victoria in 1939. A *balancer* is a bookmaker who pays out only the original stake or part of the winnings.

The *all-up bet* and its derivative *all-upper*, a person who backs horses in this fashion, also seem to be originally Australian. To bet *all-up* is to place the winnings and original stake from one race as a bet on a subsequent race, or to place cumulative winnings and stakes on a series of races.

Dead cert was originally an English term used to describe a

horse sure of winning a race; Australian equivalents are *dead bird* (to make a *dead bird* of something is to make sure of it), *soda*, *snack*, *snackeroo*, *snackerooro*, *monty* and *sure cop*.

A *roughie* is a horse at long odds. *To go off* is to win a race, especially when the win is not expected by the public. A horse that *runs a drum* performs and wins as tipped; *to drum someone* or *to give someone a drum* is to tip someone off; but a horse that loses a race badly, without a chance of winning, can earn the comment, "It didn't *get a drum*".

In modern Australian speech the adjective *cronk* is used flexibly, but in the early 1890s it was applied almost exclusively to dishonest racing. A horse run to defraud the public was said to be *cronk*. From these applications the word became synonymous with "ill, worthless, out of order", used with equally good effect about persons, animals or objects. Before the close of last century it was also being applied to stolen goods.

Stephens and O'Brien say that the term

. . . came into common use during the prizefighting and boxing boom of '89, '90 and '91. Its first use was to describe a boxer who let himself be beaten either wilfully or through lack of training. Its use was extended and a *readied-up* fight—i.e. one of which the result was prearranged—was *cronk*. Its meaning has further widened to mean anything unfair or dishonest; swindling in either sport or business.

To shunt a horse is to start it in a race with no intention of letting it win, so that its handicap will be reduced for a future event; *to strike* a horse is to feed it immediately before running; and *to stiffen*³¹ a horse, to prevent its doing its best—these are various *cronk* racing practices. A *shunted* horse is called a *waiter*, and a horse set to lose a race is said to be *in the bag*. A ring-in is called a *possum*.

The earliest use of *stumer*, for a bankrupt or defaulter, appears to have been in the Australian racing or gambling world of the 1890s. It is now applied to any failure. *To come a stumer* means to crash financially, but one can also be *in a stumer* when one is anxious or worried. English dialect has probably had something to do with the origins of these terms: *stomber*, to confuse or confound, and *stummer*, to stumble, may be related. The Australian *stew*, a fight or race the result of which has been arranged, may also have some link with *stumer*.

³¹ English slang uses the adjective *stiff* (it commonly appears as *stiff 'un*) for a horse set to lose a race.

In Australia we use the adjective *stiff*, meaning penniless, unlucky.

A speedy horse is described as a *Phar Lap*, after the noted performer of that name (by contrast we ironically call a slow-moving person a *Phar Lap*, and a foxtrot is known as a *Phar Lap gallop*), a *speeler* or a *don*. *To run like a cow* or *like a hairy goat* is to perform badly; *to donkey lick* is to defeat soundly in a race; a *dog* is a horse difficult to handle; and a *mudlark* is a horse that performs well on a muddy track.

Jockeys are known variously as *forks*, *hoops* and *pigskin artists*; a whip is a *flute*; and tipsters are known as *urgers*, *tip-slingers*, *drummers* and *curbstone jockeys*.

Stipe, an abbreviation for stipendiary steward; *gutter*, the area in front of a totalizator; *to rub out*, to debar a horse, owner or trainer from racing; *spider* or *jinker*, a trotting gig; *souplate track*, a racecourse of meagre size; and *phantom broadcast* are a few more Australianisms worth noting. The last expression was coined about 1938 by a race-commentator named H. Solomons, who, from a Melbourne radio station, gave his idea of how the day's races would be run *before* they took place. In 1939 he was responsible for an extension of the term, for in collusion with several others (unknown) he conspired to broadcast a running commentary on a race *after* it had been completed, thus allowing some profitable transactions to be made with bookmakers.

3.—TWO-UP

Although described as Australia's national game, *two-up* is a closed book to many of the public. This in spite of the fact that the "Australian Encyclopaedia" (1926) devotes a special section to it, and in spite of the fact that there are countless (illegal) *swy-up schools* or *swy schools* where the necessary education may be obtained at reasonable expense.

The origin of the game has been traced to China and to English provincial sport. It is scarcely necessary, however, to go much farther back in history than our own early days. In an article on the evils of gambling, we find the Sydney "Gazette" of 15 April 1804 recommending "the dispersion of the Little Chuck-farthing mob that generally assembles at one of the wharves in the course of the afternoon".

If you saunter down to the docks in almost any Australian port today you will find the lineal descendants of chuck-farthing days indulging in a practically identical game played with pennies. These are, of course, mainly casual schools formed

when the men find the time; the orthodox school, run on organized lines and under strict control, is called an *alley*.

The *alley* is often disguised by a gymnasium or athletic club, which provides the excuse for men to congregate, this mask being known as a *square-off*.

Figures in the two-up world are the *centre*, *centre man* or *ringie*, the ringkeeper; the *spinner* who tosses the coins; the *alley clerk*, a battler who arranges bets for a player, especially if the latter is inexperienced; the *sleeper catcher*, a person who picks up bets that have been left on the floor too long (this is regarded as a legitimate perquisite, the *sleeper* being a bet or winnings not picked up by a tardy backer); *alley loafers*, moneyless players who are never allowed a seat round a ring; the *toe-rag*, a hobo or deadbeat; a *head*, a professional gambler; a *grouter*, a gambler who passes until the chances are in his favour and then bets that the spinner will throw out on the main; and, of course, the *virgin* or *mug*, as any non-professional player of the game is known among the experts.

"You've got to protect the mugs" is an old two-up saying usually observed in organized schools, since the casual *two-upper* (another Australian term) brings a good deal of money to the game.

In *outside games*, however, there is less regard for the inexperienced man's feelings and pocket. These games, run by an *outside man*, are open fields for dishonest practices, in spite of all the nonsense that has been written about two-up being the fairest game on earth.

The small piece of board upon which the two pennies are rested for spinning is called the *kip*, *stick*, *bat* or *kiley*. This *kip* is not always what it seems. It is sometimes slotted or grooved so that a double-headed penny (a *jack*) or a double-tailed penny (a *gray*) can be inserted.³² The *kip* is then known as a *lannet*. When the coins are tossed in the air, the spinner palms one of the pennies and, with a deft twist of the *lannet*, allows the *jack* (or the *gray*, as the case may be) to spin into the air. The same form of trickery can be worked from an ordinary *kip*, by palming alone.

A deft spinner can *butterfly* or *float* a coin, so that it rocks from side to side while in the air, but does not turn over. A coin that fails to spin is called a *butterfly* or *float*.

³² Although it is not used in two-up a double-headed threepence is known as a *pig*.

General two-up expressions worth record are: *two ones*, a head and a tail when coins fall after being tossed; a *trot*, a sequence of tails (not of heads); a *coupla*, two heads; *to ground money*, to place bets; *boxer*, a forced contribution by players to the ringkeeper, collected by a two-up school employee; *to go off*, used to describe a school when a police raid takes place (a hotel caught doing after hours trade is also said to *go off*); and the cant phrases *fair go!* which is inevitably chanted before the spinner tosses the coins, *bar toss!* which anyone can call out if he thinks a spin irregular, *don't rush the kip!* meaning take it easy! or not so fast! and *Burra again!* used when a player loses and bets against everything in the ring. Among some underworld groups the game is known as *two-down*.

4.—CRICKET, FOOTBALL, ETC.

We have also inherited a fair smattering of terms from other pastimes. Cricket, football, swimming and cards have each made some minor impression on our language.

The Ashes is a cricketing term we share with England, but the margin in England's favour is not great. The expression, used to describe a periodical series of Test matches between England and Australia, originated in a mock obituary notice in the London "Sporting Times" of 2 September 1882, in which it was announced that the dead body of English cricket would be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia. It was quickly adopted in this country. In the "Bulletin" of 9 December 1882, for instance, reference is made to "the revered ashes of English cricket which had been laid on the shelf in England by the Australian Eleven". The "Australian Sportsman" of 13 August 1884 also speaks of the "revered Ashes".

Bosey and *googly* describe a ball which breaks from the off, although bowled apparently as a leg break. The former is derived from the name of B. J. T. Bosanquet, a member of the English Eleven which toured Australia in 1903-4.

In "How We Recovered the Ashes" (1904), P. F. Warner wrote:

Bosanquet can bowl as badly as anyone in the world; but when he gets a length, those slow *googlies*, as the Australian papers call them, are apt to paralyse the greatest players.

Bodyline and *bodyline bowling* are also notable Australianisms. They were used originally to describe the fast leg-theory

bowling used by Larwood and Voce during the English cricket tour of Australia in 1932-3. One of the first uses is in the Sydney "Sun" of 28 December 1932. For a time the versions *body bowling* and *body bowlers* were used,³³ but these were eclipsed by *the bodyline controversy* which stirred all cricketing sections of the world.

Bradmanesque is an adjective bequeathed to Australia by one of its greatest batsman, D. G. Bradman—known familiarly as *Braddles*, *Don* or *The Don*.

Our use of *a good wicket* for a satisfactory or profitable undertaking, appears to be indigenous and is certainly derived from the cricket field.

In the football world our chief contribution seems to have been the brand of rugby now known as *Australian Rules*, *Aussie rules*, or *the Australian game*. The bulk of the rules of this game were formulated in 1866. Victoria has always been its headquarters, although it is played extensively in other states.

A specific contribution to our language from this game is *behind*, "a point scored when the ball is kicked behind the goal-line, within a specified distance on either side of the goal".

Just as New Zealand football representatives acquired the names *All Blacks*, *Fernleaves*, and *Kiwis*, so did Australian representatives become known as *Kangaroos*, *Wallabies* and *Waratahs*.

While on the subject of nicknames, here are some worth recording from Melbourne and Sydney, all being descriptive of various teams (they are occasionally used to describe cricket, hockey and other teams):

MELBOURNE

Bloodstained angels or *niggers*,
Essendon.

Blues, Carlton.

Bulldogs, Footscray.

Demons, Melbourne.

Dogs, Footscray.

Gorillas, Fitzroy.

Jerusalem, St Kilda.

Lake Angels, South Melbourne.

Magpies, Collingwood.

Maroons, Fitzroy.

Mayblooms, Hawthorn.

Red Legs or *Red Demons*, Melbourne.

Saints, St Kilda.

Same Olds, Essendon.

Seasiders, St Kilda.

Swans, South Melbourne.

Tigers, Richmond.

Tricolours, Footscray.

³³ As in the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 17 January 1933.

SYDNEY

<i>Balmaniacs</i> , Balmain.	<i>Rabbit-ohs</i> , South Sydney.
<i>Bluebags</i> , Newtown.	<i>Saints</i> , St George.
<i>Canaries</i> , Balmain.	<i>Seasiders</i> , East Sydney.
<i>Cantabs</i> , Canterbury.	<i>Shoremen</i> , North Shore.
<i>Coasters</i> , Corrimal.	<i>Stovemakers</i> , Metters.
<i>Dragonslayers</i> , St George.	<i>Stovies</i> , Metters.
<i>Dragons</i> , St George.	<i>Tigers</i> , Balmain.
<i>Harboursiders</i> , North Shore.	<i>Townies</i> , Newtown.
<i>Hyphenates</i> , Canterbury-Bankstown.	<i>Tricolours</i> , Eastern Suburbs.
<i>Highlanders</i> , Gordon.	<i>Uni</i> , University.
<i>Magpies</i> , Western Suburbs.	<i>Villagers</i> , Manly.
<i>Mains</i> , Balmain.	<i>Waves</i> , Waverley.
<i>Newts</i> , Newtown.	<i>Wicks</i> , Randwick.

This type of nickname is to be found in practically every centre where sport is played. Sporting journals have had a considerable influence on the perpetuation—and origination—of many of these expressions.

The only other football terms that seem to be indigenous are the verb *to rabbit*, to collar or trip a player when he is running with the ball, and *pig*, a football forward.

The type of stroke known as the *Australian crawl*—apparently first introduced about 1901—is worthy of first place in our swimming vocabulary. Other authentic expressions are *dip*, for a swim or bathe (1880), which has stock-dipping antecedents; *dumper*, a wave that collapses suddenly in the surf (from which we have taken the verb *to dump* and *get dumped*); *to shoot the breakers*, meaning to surf in the open sea; *iceberg*, one who swims regularly in winter-time; *sharkbait* or *sharkbaiter*, a swimmer who risks attack from sharks by swimming a long distance from shore on an open beach; *belly-buster*, *belly-flop* and *belly-flopper*, an ungainly dive; *honeypot* and *gin's flop*, a way of jumping into water with the arms round the knees; *to crocodile*, to swim with another person's hands on one's shoulders.

A few minor items linked with the sea are *berley*, ground bait used by a fisherman; *baitbobber*, a fisherman; *ballooner*, a balloon jib on a yacht; and *kicker*, a jib.

Australian fishermen commonly use *baited* with a meaning directly opposed to that of Standard English. In Standard English a fisherman baits a hook before throwing it in the water.

In Australia, the fish *baits* a line by removing the bait from the hook. It is more common to hear a fisherman say his line is *baited* when, in fact, there is no bait on the hook, than for him to use the expression when he has just put bait on the hook.

Our card-playing vocabulary is in a formative stage, but several terms seem to have been developed by Australia. *Bullet*, an ace (it is also used in U.S. poker slang); *bunch of grapes*, the club suit in a pack of cards; *burr cutter*, the jack of diamonds; *gerbera* and *lubra*, rhyming slang versions of Yarborough, in bridge; *pianola*, a hand that plays itself; *onedleton* (pronounced "wundleton"), as a variant of singleton; and the cant phrase, *heads on 'em like mice*, used to express awe of a strong hand—these are the best of the local effort.

When, in the game of bridge, a player is dealt a hand containing no cards of one particular suit, that suit is called a *blouse suit* or *green suit*. This may be derived from the old solo whist use of *ace* (*queen*, etc.) *blouse*, which indicates that it is the only card of that suit in the hand. Since many whist terms are French, it is possible that the Australian use may have been affected by the French *blouser*, to dupe or mislead, or the reflexive *se blouser*, to blunder.

Nock and Kirby (the name of a Sydney firm) is used to describe a hand which may be thrown in when it is not considered worth while to play it. Oddly enough, the expression is reported from Melbourne.

An old card expression noted by Lentzner in 1891 was *sick*, meaning without trumps. He said:

In playing nap, if the player's trumps are exhausted he will say *sick*, and if he has a hand full of trumps and challenges the board to see if anyone has any left, he will ask, "All sick?"

Kiss the dealer! is a cant phrase spoken when the ace, two, three and four-pipped cards of a suit fall on the table in the playing of a trick.

The card game known as *boxer* appears to be Australian, at least in name. Here is a description of the game as given by Magistrate Oram in Sydney Central Court in December 1943: "Two players only, known as the banker and punter, hold cards that all the other players wager on with the banker and among themselves as to the value of those two hands. Police describe it, in effect, as a game of two-up played with cards."

From boxing we have acquired *kiss the cross*, to be knocked out; *catcuff*, a light blow; *fork-hander*, *mauldy* and *mollydooker*, a left-handed boxer (taken from the old English *mauley* and *dook* or *duke*, the fist or hand); *to sky the rag*, to admit defeat or throw in the towel; and the phrase, used of a weakling or cowardly fighter, *he couldn't fight his way out of a paper bag*.

Other Australianisms from various sports include: *chop* and *woodchop*, a contest in which axemen take part; *divot digger* and *divoteer*, a clumsy and inefficient golfer; and *cinder shifter*, a speedway rider.³⁴

5.—CLOTHES

Although clothes and dressing are not usually classed among our normal pastimes and pleasures—the Australian having little patience with clothes for clothes' sake—this is as good a place as any to run over the small sartorial vocabulary we possess. This vocabulary is mainly notable for the large number of terms devoted to headgear, principal among which are the Australian equivalents of what the Englishman calls a *bowler* and the American a *derby*.

Here are our contributions: *boxer*, *bocker*, *bun*, *plug hat*, *hard hitter*, *egg-boiler*, *hard hat*, *hop herry* and *peadodger*.

The strong Australian sunshine is probably responsible in the long run for the fact that we can almost interpret our history in terms of hats of one kind and another. First on the list was the *cabbage-tree hat*. In 1799 D. Collins made a diary entry in his "Account of New South Wales" in which he referred to a hat worn by Flinders "made of white filaments of the cabbage-tree". This type of headgear bulked largely in our early days and hoodlums who wore such hats were called *cabbageites* and *cabbage-tree mobs*. Even an exclamation *my cabbage-tree!* was in popular use.

Belltopper, a silk top hat (1853) was another Australianism. So, in a special way, was *billycock* (1865). The latter was originally English, but the Australian *billycock* differed from the English in being made of hard instead of soft felt and in having a turned-up brim. *Billy* was an Australian abbreviation.

Then there was the *nan-nan*, a straw hat once favoured by the larrikins; the *nail-can*, a type of top hat; the *digger's delight*, a large felt hat; the *decker*, *fell-off-a-bus* and *roofer*, terms for

³⁴ *Dirt-track racing* with motor-cycles, now a popular sport in at least twelve countries, was pioneered at Maitland, N.S.W., in 1924.

hats in general; and, as the Australian equivalent of the U.S. ten-gallon hat, the *Cunnamulla cartwheel* and *lunatic hat*.

Cady is often used in Australia, but it hails originally from English dialect; the only distinctly new use it has been given in this part of the world is for a straw hat in New Zealand.

The *jumper* was almost certainly an Australian invention, although not exactly in the form we know it today. The original Australian *jumper* was a type of blouse or smock worn by men during gold-digging days (the first record was in 1852), but C. R. Read, in "What I Heard, Saw and Did" (1853), refers to "a *jumper* of lamb's wool plaid in various shades", thus showing that it was probably the original form of our modern jumper. However, this new sense took a considerable time to develop, and as late as 1858 a writer refers to a blue flannel shirt as a jumper.

This type of garment was probably identical with what was known (from 1877 to 1900) as a *Crimean shirt*. Boldrewood refers to such a shirt in his "Ups and Downs" (1878) as having "black and scarlet in alternate bars". In the "Australasian Printers' Keepsake" (1858) we find it "a flaring red".

Bell-bottomed trousers, once favoured by larrikins, have already been referred to; so has *bluey* for a type of smock once worn by Tasmanian convicts. *Parramatta*, a worsted and cotton fabric originally made at Parramatta, near Sydney, in convict days, is another old-timer worthy of record.

For the rest, it is necessary to note only *barebum* and *bum-shaver*, for a short coat or dinner-jacket; *cords*, corduroy trousers; and *rammies*, trousers in general.

Leggings worn by outback travellers and workers are known as *dog stiffeners* or *dog poisoners*. *Larstins* or *lastings* were old names for elastic-sided boots or shoes. Heavy boots were called *road party boots*, and elastic-sided boots were called *springsides*.

Of particular interest is the word *bowyang*. This describes a strap or string tied below the knee of a worker's trousers to keep the leg-ends off the ground or to prevent the cloth dragging on the knee. First used in Australia about 1900, the word came from the provincial English *yanks* or *bow-yankees*, which were leather or other leggings worn by agricultural labourers, reaching from below the knee to the top of the boots.

Bill Bowyangs was the name given to a fictitious rural character in the "Bulletin" of 23 March 1905. This name survives

in the form *Ben Bowyang*, a character in the Australian comic strip "Gunn's Gully", by McRae.

To nugget, to clean one's boots or shoes, is one of the few trade-names that have graduated to the status of a colloquialism in the Antipodes. Nugget is a well-known make of boot-polish.

Swimming costumes are known variously as *togs*, *bathers*, a *cossie* and—in the eastern states where brief costumes were censored off the beaches by a Cabinet minister named Spooner—as *Spooners* and *necks-to-knees*.

Modesties for baby's pilchers; *aeroplanes*, a bow tie; *storm-stick*, an umbrella; and *headlights*, spectacles, are a few general terms that were also born in this country.

CHAPTER X

PEOPLES AND PLACES

1.—GENERALIZED NICKNAMES

IF slang is colourful it is also utilitarian. A good deal of it is so utilitarian that we may even hesitate to call it slang for the simple reason that it puts into some succinct and exact form a concept that might otherwise have to be approached in a roundabout fashion. What better descriptions have we for a person living in the Northern Territory than *Territorian* and *Topender*? What, apart from that laboured hybrid *New South Welshman*, have we to replace *Sydneysider*? How much easier it is to say *Westralian* than *Western Australian*, to say *inlander* instead of "a person living in remote inland areas", to describe the great "scrub" of northern Victoria as *the Mallee* instead of "the districts where *Eucalyptus dumosa* is found in profusion".

Even the simple word *Australian* is a product of our national growth. Just as the original *New Zealanders* were the aborigines of that country, so the original *Australians* were the blacks. Not for many generations after the European's arrival did the native-born white acquire the name *Australian*. He was a *colonial* or a *currency lad*, but he certainly had no desire to be called a *native* of this country, when such description would confuse him with a blackfellow. It was a different matter after the aborigines had been *dispersed*—as the euphemism went—and after arrivals of fresh immigrants had put the numerical superiority of the European beyond doubt. Then he was not ashamed to be called an Australian native; he would be less maudlinly sentimental over *Home*,¹ *the old country*, *the old dart*, or *the old land* as Britain was known; he would talk less of being *out here*; he would no longer interpret life in terms of the "Times" and the

¹F. Adams in "The Australians" (1892) wrote: "Ten years ago England was spoken of as the Old Country or Home. Now it is 'home' or

more sarcastically 'ome'. The inverted commas make all the difference and the dropped 'h' contains a class contempt."

"Tatler"; he would begin to develop his own sports and customs and ways of speaking, and he would become as firmly rooted in this country as were the original blacks before Europeans usurped their birthright. These are evolutionary inevitabilities. There is nothing obscure about them.

If there are still some Australians who try to look at their country and their fellows through European eyes, these pretences do not erase the fact that they are Australians, but only disguise it a little. As these people become numerically fewer so will the pretences die.

We can perceive our growth towards nationalism in the many expressions we have developed to describe those who are Australians and those who are not.

For the Englishman: *pommy*, *jimmy*,² *homey*, *limejuicer*,³ *chum*, *chummy*, *choom* and *black hat*.⁴

For the Australian: *cornstalk*, *cornstalker*, *gumsucker*, *Aussie*, *Aussielander*, *kangaroo*, *wallaby* and *billjim*.⁵

For the aboriginal: *abo*, *black*, *blackfellow*, *black skin*, *binghi*, *bing*, *boang*, *boong*, *darkie*, *murky*, *dark cloud* and *myall*.

For the Chinese: *chink*,⁶ *chinkie*, *chow*, *chow-chow*, *paddy*,⁷ *pat*, *pong*, *dingbat*,⁸ *canary*, *dink*, *john*, *johnny* and *john chinaman*.

For the Italian: *sky*, *eyeto*, *ding* and *dingbat*.

² The generally accepted theory of the origin of *pommy* is that it came from *jimmygrant* (1845), as a rhyme on "immigrant", which was shortened to *jimmy*, the word then being merged by rhyme into *pomegranate* (it is suggested that the rosy-cheeked English may have given some association with the ruddy fruit) and subsequently clipped back to *pommy*. Further clipping to *pom* has also taken place. Although claimed by some people to be a long-established word in Australia, *pommy* is not recorded by Stephens and O'Brien (1910) who were keen observers, although they noted *jimmy* and *jimmygrant*.

³ This Australian use for any Englishman is taken from the U.S. slang *limey* and *limejuicer* for a British sailor.

⁴ *Ex* the headgear worn by *new chums* on arrival. Now obsolete.

⁵ Presumably *ex* the popularity of these two Christian names in Australia. Obsolescent.

⁶ Reference to these terms was made in Chapter I, showing that they were used originally in Australia.

⁷ An old use illuminated by J. Inglis, "Our Australian Cousins" (1879): "Their [i.e. the Chinese] usually placid temper . . . seems to be ruffled when the boys take to calling them Irishmen. What there is between *pat* and *john* which calls forth such manifestations . . . I know not, but a Chinaman here is mortally insulted when you call him *paddy*."

⁸ Perhaps derived by rhyme on *pat*, or by association between *mad* as a *Chinaman* and *mad* as a *dingbat*.

For the Jewish refugee from Europe: *reff* (sometimes slightly *reff-raff*), *reffo*, *refujew* and *Jew chum* (a pun on *new chum*).

For New Zealanders: *Enzedders*, *pig islanders*, *kiwis*, *shaky islanders*, *quaky islanders*, *Maorilanders*,⁹ *fernleaves*.

Within Australia we have been active in devising labels for people from our various states; sure sign that we are becoming accommodated to our environment and have rid ourselves of futile feelings that we are exiles in a barbaric land where nothing except the uncouth can survive. Thus:

For Western Australians: *gropers*, *sandgropers*, *groperlanders*,¹⁰ *straight-hairs*¹¹ and *Westralians*.

For South Australians: *croweaters*, *magpies* and *wheatlanders*.

For Queenslanders: *bananalanders*, *banana men*, *banana eaters*, *kanakalanders*¹² and *sugarlanders*.

For Victorians: *Yarrasiders*,¹³ *cabbage gardeners*, *cabbage patchers* and *cabbage landers*.

For people in the Northern Territory: *Territorians* and *topenders*. Residents of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea are also known as *Territorians*.

For Tasmanians: *Van Diemenese*, *Vandemonians*,¹⁴ *Derveniers*, *Derwent ducks*,¹⁵ *mountain devils*, *mutton-birds*, *mutton-bird eaters*,¹⁶ *barracouters*,¹⁷ *raspberrylanders*, *apple islanders*, *Tassies* and *Tassylanders*.

For people in New South Wales: *Sydneysiders*, *walers* and *Ma-staters*.

In 1894 a writer asked in the "Bulletin": "Why not *Eastralia*, *Norstralia*, *Soustralia*, *Westralia* and *Centralia*?" These names

⁹ This was probably an original Bulletinism, although the use of *Maoriland* for New Zealand was current before the "Bulletin" was published.

¹⁰ These terms are commentaries on the sand and desert of much of W.A. There is a Perth journal called "The Groper".

¹¹ Applied originally to Westralian convicts.

¹² Used during the closing decades of last century when many Pacific island natives were imported to work the Queensland plantations.

¹³ Victoria, originally a portion of N.S.W., was not created a separate state until 1851. Up to that time, and even after, distinctions were made between those who lived on the Melbourne *side* of the colony and those

on the Sydney *side*. Thus, in "Robbery Under Arms", Boldrewood alludes to "our side of the country" [i.e. the Sydney side] and again to "Melbourne . . . we all liked that side of the country". Although modern usage has tended to limit the use of *Sydneysider* to describe a resident or native of Sydney, its correct use is to describe any person in N.S.W.

¹⁴ Old terms derived from the original use of Van Diemen's Land for Tasmania.

¹⁵ More old terms, referring to the Derwent River. Hobart convicts were once called *Derwenters*.

¹⁶ Strictly speaking, used to describe people living in northern Tasmania.

¹⁷ An old nickname for residents of Hobart.

sounded far-fetched in those times, but three of them are now well established, the best known, of course, being *Westralia*. It is easy to use, for the simple reason that it denotes an entire state. *Eastralia*, however, denotes the three states on the eastern seaboard and is not specific enough for general use. *Centralia* is also vague; it was once suggested as the name for what is now called South Australia, but, generally speaking, it is taken to denote the remote inland section of Australia also known as the *Centre*, *Heart*, *Dead Heart*, *Never Never* and *Red Centre*.

Mainlander is used by Tasmanians—also by people on Norfolk Island—to describe a person living on the main continent of Australia. *T'othersider* is current in Tasmania for anyone living on the main continent, but specifically for a Victorian, by Victorians for a Tasmanian (i.e. on the other side of Bass Strait), by Westralians for a person living in the eastern states (i.e. on the other side of the continent) and vice versa, and by New Zealanders for an Australian (i.e. on the other side of the Tasman).

Popular names for the various Australian states are:

Western Australia: *Westralia*, *Groperland*.

South Australia: *the Wheat State*.

Queensland: *Bananaland*, *Kanakaland* (now obsolete) and *the Nigger State* (now obsolete).

Victoria: *the Cabbage Patch* or *Cabbage Garden*.

Northern Territory: *Land of the White Ant*, *the Top End*.

Tasmania: *Tassie*, *Tassyland* or *Tassieland*, *Raspberryland*, *the Apple Island*, *the Speck*, *the Flyspeck*, *the Isle of Sleep* and the now obsolete *Vandemonia*.¹⁸

New South Wales: *New South*, *the Ma State* or *Ma*.

The use of abbreviated forms is also popular, especially *W.A.*, *Vic.* and *N.S.* or *N.S.W.* By the same token we use *A.C.T.* or *F.C.T.* to denote the Australian or Federal Capital Territory where Canberra is situated, *N.I.* for Norfolk Island, *T.I.* for Thursday Island, and *N.G.* for New Guinea.

Australia¹⁹ as a whole is known variously as *Aussie*, *Aussieland*, *Kangarooland* and *the Land of the Wattle*.

¹⁸ *Vandemonianism* was once used to describe violent or ruffianly behaviour, and *vandemonian* was the corresponding adjective.

¹⁹ Commonly abbreviated to *Aust.* with Australasia designated by *A/asia*.

And now here are a few fanciful names bestowed on some of our capital cities:

Perth: *the Swan City*.

Adelaide: *City of the Churches, Holy City, Church City*,²⁰ *Farinaceous City* (or *Village*).²¹

Brisbane: *Banana City, Brissie*.

Melbourne: *City of the Cabbage Garden, Chess-board City, City of Dreadful (K)nights, the Big Smoke*.²²

Newcastle, N.S.W., is often called *the Coal City*, and as the early convict settlement there was originally called the *Coal River* settlement, it has been well vindicated by time.

Botany Bay seems to have been used incorrectly almost from the outset. In the first place it was used wrongly to denote the convict settlement in Sydney Cove. Then it was used for the colony of New South Wales as a whole. R. M. Martin ("History of Australasia") wrote in 1836: "Many persons long used to the term Botany Bay believe that the colony is founded on the shores of this extensive inlet"; in 1845 D. MacKenzie ("Ten Years in Australia") alludes to "Sydney, the capital of Botany Bay" and six years later we find S. Mossman ("Gold Regions of Australia") referring to Sydney as "this Botany Bay town".

Nor was this the full extent of the catachresis. Botany Bay was even used as a synonym for Australia as a whole, as shown by T. P. Macqueen ("Australia as She Is and as She May Be") in 1840, who says: "The term Botany Bay is used to represent a country co-equal in extent with all Europe united." Most of this misapplication was due to ignorance and misunderstanding in Britain, for, as H. Melville pointed out in 1851 in his "Australia and Prison Discipline": "Twenty-five years back New Holland,²³ New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land were all better known in Europe under the one general expressive term of Botany Bay." It is, nevertheless, extraordinary to find a writer on Australian life²⁴ declaring, as late as 1863, that "Botany Bay, near Sydney, was the great depot for our convicts from 1788 to 1840". This serves to show that the fault was not altogether with people abroad. This contention is supported by the existence of

²⁰ From the large number of churches in Adelaide.

²¹ Obsolescent. *Ex* the wheat-production of S.A.

²² These last two nicknames are shared with Sydney.

²³ The name originally given to Australia by Dutch explorers.

²⁴ C. B. Gibson, "Life Among Convicts" (1863).

such expressions as *Botany Bay aristocracy*, *Botany Bay' coat of arms*,²⁵ *Botany Bay felons* and *Botany Bay swells*.

Outback Australian place-names are featured in numerous idiomatic phrases. For instance, *back o' Bourke* signifies a great distance inland, *go to Bourke!* means go to the devil! and *from here to Bourke* is a metaphorical measure of great distance.

The Barcoo River and district in Queensland gave us *Barcoo buster*, the *Barcoo challenge*, and the *Barcoo rot*, *vomit* or *spew*. *Belyando spew* was named after a river in western Queensland.

Cobar is used to denote a penny—there are copper mines at Cobar, New South Wales—and *Cobar shower* denotes a duststorm. *Darling shower*, *Wilcannia shower*, and *Bedourie shower* are employed similarly. I. L. Idriess uses the last to describe a red duststorm and adds: "Here [i.e. at Bedourie, Queensland] so they say, the crows fly backwards to keep the dust out of their eyes." This well-worn bush joke was originally publicized by the humorous poet W. T. Goodge. In his "Hits, Skits and Jingles" (1899) he refers to the *Oozlum Bird* which "always flies tail-first to keep the dust out of its eyes".

Several Victorian towns have also won for themselves a place in our language. For instance, Geelong, which a writer in 1859²⁶ said was "the point on which the fortunes of the colony culminate and revolve", was once known as the *Pivot City* and its residents styled themselves *Pivotonians*. Geelong sporting representatives are still called by that name in the Melbourne press.²⁷

Ballarat stars in the descriptive phrase *looking like a Ballarat jewshop*, meaning in confusion or in a turmoil. An old-timer tells me that a large well-built man from Ballarat was formerly called a *Big Balla* in contrast to a weedy type who would be known as a *rat*.

Among travellers in the outback there exists a practice of familiarizing place-names by shortening them and prefixing them with "the". Thus we hear of *the Bar*, for Marble Bar, W.A., reputedly the hottest place in Australia; *the Alice*, Alice Springs, N.T.; *the Tennant*, Tennant Creek, N.T.; and *the*

²⁵ According to an 1845 writer this signified "a pair of artificially black eyes". Another writer in 1854 said it denoted "broken noses and black eyes".

²⁶ W. Kelly, "Life in Victoria", vol. i.

²⁷ According to W. Kelly, *ibid.*, various slang terms and phrases invented by Geelong residents were dubbed *Geelongese* in the Melbourne press during the 1850s. This is the earliest known reference to anything like a local dialect in Australia.

Corner, the point where the borders of Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales meet, known officially as Haddor Corner. *Corner country* is therefore land near Haddon Corner.

2.—PLACE-NAMES

Before dealing with purely local slang, it would not be out of place to give brief attention to place-naming in this country. Generally speaking, the most notable feature about Australian place-names is their lack of originality and imaginativeness. Many of them read like a catalogue of London suburbs and English provincial towns. They represent a smear of dullness wiped across the Australian map.

We have used aboriginal names fairly freely, but we could have afforded to sacrifice many English importations in order to use more of those melodious native words.

Where our early settlers managed to impose a glimpse or two of originality, their heirs seem to have made deliberate attempts to cut out all deviations from dullness. Whither have gone such poetic contributions as Hunchy Mama Creek, Venus Jump Up and Gentleman's Glasshouses (Queensland), Broken Cart and Murdering Swamp (New South Wales), Maggoty Gully, Bust-my-Gall and Break-my-Neck (Tasmania)? Why, on the other hand, are we inflicted with names like those noted by J. Foster Fraser in "Australia" (1912):

When in Australia I started collecting curious names. In New South Wales alone I found thirty Dead Horse Flats, twenty-seven Tin-Pot Gullies, 130 Sandy Creeks . . . ninety Sugar Loaf Hills.

Approximately 14,600 names of Australian localities are listed in the "Commonwealth Census Bulletin" of 1933.²⁸ Of these approximately 4800 or one-third are aboriginal or derived from aboriginal names. Although considerable, this percentage by no means compares with the position in New Zealand where more than 57 per cent of the principal place-names are Maori.²⁹

Many Australian aboriginal names admittedly present confusing problems of pronunciation. People from overseas find difficulty in coping with words like Wagingoberambi, Collarenebri, Dudinalup, Gringegalgon, Mundabullangana, Naringaningalook and Nunjikompita. Even repetitive names like Wagga

²⁸ Part viii, Population and Occupied Dwellings in Localities.

²⁹ In the North Island over 76 per

cent of the principal place-names are Maori. English names predominate in the South Island.

Wagga, Mogil Mogil, Kurri Kurri, Bong Bong, if not difficult to pronounce, are strange-sounding to foreign ears. The majority of them, however, display greater imagination, virility and forcefulness on the part of the natives, than on that of the Europeans who have named so many of our towns, rivers and other geographical sundries.

Many aboriginal names are not only beautiful to the ear—when pronounced in their unmutated, unanglicized version—but are splendid in their imagery.

W. W. Thorpe, ethnologist of the Australian Museum, Sydney, compiled an excellent “List of New South Wales Aboriginal Place-names and Their Meanings” and, in the third edition issued in 1940, gave some 730 examples. The booklet was revised and enlarged in 1943 by Frederick D. McCarthy. Here are a few colourful extracts that speak for themselves:

Balagorang: Feeding ground of the kangaroo.

Gowrie: Down of the eaglehawk.

Beebari: Place of a large brown snake.

Wollumbi: Meeting of the waters.

Myuna: Clear water.

Keelbubban: The sound of rippling water.

Marangaroo: Little blue flowers.

Wrote Mundy in “Our Antipodes” (1852):

Some of the native names of places are grandly sonorous and polysyllabic; it is well when they are retained by the English possessors of the lands, instead of substituting vulgar and unmeaning European titles.

Numerous Australian poetasters have been tempted to put together “poems” composed mainly of these native words. In 1824 J. D. Lang gave us:

I like the native names, as Parramatta,
And Illawarra, and Woolloomooloo,
Nandowra, Woogarora, Bulkomatta,
Tomah, Toongabbie, Mittagong, Meroo;
Buckobble, Cumleroy, and Coolangatta,
The Warragumby, Bargo, Burradoo;
Cookbundoon, Carrabaiga, Wingecarribee,
The Wollondilly, Yurumbon, Bungarribee.

In contrast to these, how meaningless sound such filchings from abroad as Cardiff, St Ives (twice), Liverpool, Torquay, Toronto, Texas, Virginia (twice), Jericho (twice) and Jerusalem, especially when we realize that many of these names are attached

to places that are little more than trifling settlements or remot townships. "It is very confusing," wrote Keith Kennedy in 1933,³⁰ "to use names belonging to other parts of the world which have no significance here, and it is absurd to name place after people of no special note or distinction."

There are, of course, many more place-names than those listed in the "Census Bulletin". For instance, more than 6300 name of cities, towns, railway stations, counties, parishes and stream are to be found in Victoria alone, of which 50 per cent are aboriginal. In Sydney alone there are more than 6800 street names. But the "Census Bulletin" provides us with a good cross section of the material, and from it we can obtain an accurate summary of the story as it affects Australia as a whole.

In the following comments, therefore, it should be understood that I am referring to material taken from the "Census Bulletin"

As already stressed, there is not much originality and imagination in our place-naming. We can agree with Sydney "Truth" of 7 December 1890, which remarked, "Nomenclature does not seem to be amongst the gifts of the pioneers."

But there is, fortunately, a tincture of wit and virility to compensate for the generally drab scene.

Here are some of the best of them:

Blowhard, Boosey, and Wail (Victoria), Goodnight Scrub and Struck Oil (Queensland), Wishbone and Youanmi (Western Australia), Broke, Come-by-Chance, Goodnight, Nevertire, and Terrible Billy (New South Wales).

To these might be added: Sulky, The Patch, Bleak House, Day Trap, Restdown, Nowhere Creek (Victoria); Banana, Banana Pocket, Bony Mountain, Fat Hen Creek, Dinner Corner, Jew's Retreat, Friday's Pocket, Fortitude Valley, Tin Can Bay (Queensland); Broad Arrow, Gooseberry Hill, Noman's Lake (Western Australia); Flowerpot, The Den, Snug (Tasmania); World's End, Chain of Ponds (South Australia); Deadman Creek, Confidence, Frying Pan, Zig Zag, Blow Clear, Fine Flower, Blink Mouth, Dog Trap, Cowshed Hill, Jawbone, Guy Fawkes, Motto Tea Gardens, Putty, Number One (New South Wales).

Some of the native names also carry an incipient smile with them: Bally Bally and Jackitup (Western Australia); Bung Bong La La, Dart Dart, Wee Wee Rup, Wood Wood, Wool Wool (Victoria); Muckadilla, O'Bil Bil (Queensland); Cudlee Creek

³⁰ President of the N.S.W. Anthropological Society, 1933-4, in a foreword to "Australian Aboriginal Place-names", by James Tyrrell.

(South Australia); Tonkley Onkley, Keepit, Merrywinebone, Driggle Draggie, Berry Jerry and Book Book (New South Wales).

Although at first sight it might be thought that place-names are remote from the general course of the Australian language, there are several good reasons why this section has been included. In the first place it stresses the large number of aboriginal words in constant use and in the second place it shows that a few Australianisms have acquired a niche on the map. Some of the more interesting of these are:

Billabong, Bunyip, Jumbuk, Smoko, Woolshed, Nuggety (Victoria); Bushranger's Creek, Combo, Jamberoo, Little Billabong, Willi Willi (New South Wales); Woolshed Creek, Boomerang, New Chum (Queensland); Woolshed Flat, Yacka (South Australia); Kronkup, Waddy Flat (Western Australia).

In general usage Jumbuk is spelt *jumbuck*, Willi Willi is rendered *willy willy*, and Yacka is *yakka* or *yacker*. Kronkup seems to be an authentic Westralian native name, but the Australian uses of *cronk*, spurious, worthless, ill, and *cronk up*, to become or render worthless, etc., immediately suggest themselves. A *combo* is a white man who cohabits with an aboriginal girl or woman. *Waddy* is an aboriginal pidgin corruption of "wood", used originally for a wooden club or stick, and first recorded in print in the Sydney "Gazette" of 2 September 1804.

These are minor items indeed amongst our thousands of place-names, but they provide some evidence that, even in spite of ourselves, we have managed to preserve a few traces of originality. Of course, by contrast we can look to our repetitions of names and almost forget there is such a thing as imagination. Sandy Creek appears eighteen times in the "Census Bulletin"; Spring Creek, fourteen times; Deep Creek, twelve times; Red Hill, seven times, together with Redhill twice and Redhills once; Reedy Creek, eight times; Back Creek, seven times; and Paradise, five times (there are also three Arcadias and two Gardens of Eden).

Here is a group of New South Wales place-names not to be found in the "Census Bulletin": Butterbone, Bungle Gully, Coalbaggie Creek, Monkey, Toilon, Tomboy, Wait-a-while, Iron Bong, Puddledock and Mumblebone.

Sydney provides a fair example of the type of Australianism commemorated in street-names. Most notable are Anzac, which occurs sixteen times; Waratah, twenty-seven examples; Boom-

erang, seven examples; Kangaroo, four examples; Gonyah, Kookaburra and Brumby.

English words have been mutilated to appear aboriginal in a number of instances, e.g. Tomanbil, Cuddell, Byaduk and Bringabilly.

Hypocorisms or familiarizations are a persistent feature of Australian slang. We find them in many popular clippings of place-names, although the bulk of these clippings are mainly local in use. For instance, Bathurst (N.S.W.) people regularly shorten the name of their town in writing to *Bx*, which would be unintelligible to the majority of Australians.

In the "Bulletin" of 14 April 1900 a writer noted the following place-name shortenings from Queensland: *Luck* for Lucknow; *Riddle* for Llanrheidol; *Buck*, for Toolebux; *Dot* for Carrandotta; *Bull*, for Boulia; and *Dan*, Urandangie.

There are countless other examples, such as *Oodna*, for Oodnadatta; *Coota*, for Cootamundra; *Mullum*, for Mullumbimby; *Wang*, for Wallerawang; *Parra*, for Parramatta; *Berra*, for Canberra; *Willy*, for Williamstown; *Brissie*, for Brisbane; *Rocky*, for Rockhampton; *the Gatha* for Leongatha and *the Burra* for Korumburra. There are also interpolated forms such as *Dim-damn-boola*, for Dimboola, and *Warrack-bloody-nabeal*, for Warracknabeal. But all these are mainly localized in use or, at the best, rarely heard and known outside the boundary of their home state.

Australians are only slowly being persuaded to adopt or invent indigenous Christian names for their children. In both Australia and New Zealand girls appear to be more favoured as subjects for experiment than boys, due probably to the fact that many native words end in a vowel. Here are some native names in current use, which give an indication of increasing popularity: *Girls*: *Jarrah* (the tree), *Brewa* (from the town named Brewarrina), *Kylie* (a boomerang), *Coreen* ("the last of the hills", a place-name in N.S.W.), *Eena* (aboriginal for "good little girl"). *Boys*: *Kanga* (an abbreviation of kangaroo), *Wilga* (a flowering tree). *Sydney*, especially with the "y" spelling, is popular as a boy's name. Here are some Maori names given to girls in New Zealand: *Huia* (a bird), *Tui* (a bird), *Ngaio* (a tree), *Rata* (a tree), *Kara* (a Maori pidgin version of the word "colour").

A count of 2000 Christian names given to newly-born children—published under birth announcements in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide papers in January and February 1944

OL LULUAI, TULTUL NA MAN BILOG GUVMAN

Yumi sitron nau.

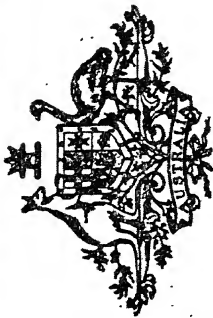
Ol dei ol dei, balus bilog yumi raumm olgeda-Nugini bilog bom
im sip, surim lanis bakarap im somtig bilog Japan.

Yu mas lukaut im masta bilog balus sipos ol i kam daon long būs
na nabis bilog yu.

Hait im gut, gifim gut pela karkai, gut pela haus wok im bet, sipos lek bilog ol i nogut.

Birig im long Kiap, sipos onpela i stap klostu. Olgeda i got Pas bilog Guvman. Yumas halip im ol.

GUVMAN I TOK.



PIDGIN-ENGLISH PAMPHLET

Copies of this pamphlet were dropped by Allied planes to natives along the north coast of New Guinea. The message reads: "To all village headmen and Government boys. We are strong now. Every day our planes fly all around New Guinea, bombing ships, shooting up launches and damaging other things belonging to the Japanese. You must keep a lookout for any (Allied) airman if he comes down in the bush or on beaches near where you live. Hide him well, give him good food, make him a comfortable bed if he cannot walk. Take him to the District Officer if there is one near. All our airmen have Government passes. You must help them. Government order."

—showed that the following names (in order of preference) are popular in Australia:

Girls: Ann(e), Margaret, Elizabeth, Mary, Patricia, Kay(e), Lorraine, Helen, Dianne (Diana), Joy, Jean, Dawn, Susan (Susanne, Suzanne), Christine, Joan, Lynette, Sandra, Janet (Jeanette), Robin (Robyn), Janice.

Boys: John, Robert, David, James, Peter, Ian, William, Anthony, Graham, Ronald, Brian, Alan (Allan, Allen), George, Charles, Edward, Paul, Barry (Barrie), Gordon, Thomas, Douglas.

3.—LOCAL SLANG

From their nature—especially from the fact that they commemorate local names—expressions like *Barcoo rot*, *Cunnamulla cartwheel*, *Grabben Gullen pie*, *Murrumbidgee whaler*, *Yarra bankers*, *Wagga blanket*, and *Flemington confetti* tend to remain localized; but many of them have travelled throughout Australia. This makes the task of fixing their area of influence extremely difficult.

Practically every Australian, no matter where he lives, has heard of *the Loo* and *the Cross*, as Woolloomooloo and King's Cross, Sydney, are known familiarly. But he may not know where *the Mad Mile*,³¹ *the Hungry Mile*,³² and *the Dirty Half-Mile*³³ are to be found. He will know the *Great Australian Bight* as a geographical name, but he will probably be fogged when asked what are its specific applications in Brisbane³⁴ and Sydney.³⁵ He may not realize that an ice-cream carton is called a *dixie* in Melbourne, a *pottle* in the South Island of New Zealand, and a *bucket*³⁶ in Sydney. In short, a certain section of our slang is definitely localized and not as easy to collect as more general expressions.³⁷

Here, however, is a selection of local material which may be regarded as fairly representative:

31 The Perth-Fremantle road, running through Claremont, a favourite track for speedsters.

32 Sussex Street, Sydney.

33 King's Cross Road, Sydney.

34 The end of Queen Street, Brisbane.

35 George Street, Sydney, outside the Town Hall. Also called (in wartime) Battleship Corner.

36 Originally an American use.

37 World War No. 2 produced some localized expressions, among them *Romano's Regiment* and *Prince's Own*, war dodgers who frequent these well-known Sydney restaurants; *St Kilda Road Commandos*, men attached to Allied Land Headquarters, Melbourne; and *Queen Street Commandos*, another Melbourne base unit.

MELBOURNE

- Chancery Lane.* The portion of Little Collins Street, between Queen and William Streets, where many barristers and lawyers have their offices.
- Collins Street twist.* Cigar or cigarette butts picked up in the street for subsequent smoking.
- Footscray Alps.* The elevated portion of Footscray.
- Li'l Bluk Street.* Little Bourke Street, where many Chinese live or work.
- Little Lon.* Little Lonsdale Street.
- Puppydog Corner.* The corner of Collins and Swanston Streets.
- Shop, the.* Melbourne University.
- Yan Yean.* Melbourne water supply (listed by Morris).
- Yarra.* A fool or simpleton.
- Yarra bend.* "Equivalent to the English word Bedlam" (Morris).

SYDNEY

- Café de Fairfax.* A pie and coffee stall which stands nightly outside the "Sydney Morning Herald" office, in O'Connell Street. The Fairfax family owns the "Herald".
- Club, the or Sydney's Open Air Club.* A company of men who meet nightly on the footpath opposite King's Cross Theatre, Sydney. There is no membership fee and no elected officers.
- Darlo.* Darlinghurst.
- Dom, the.* Sydney Domain.
- Douche-can Alley.* King's Cross Road.
- Hills, the.* Surry Hills.
- On the Hill.* (At) Hunter's Hill.
- Operation Park.* Bondi Esplanade Park, a favourite spot for invalids to recuperate.
- Over the Gap, to go.* To commit suicide.
- Poverty Point.* Formerly the corner of King and Castlereagh streets; now the corner of Park and Pitt streets.
- Pub, the.* Hotel Australia.
- Robbery Park or Robbo Park.* Roseberry Park racecourse.
- Rooty Hill.* King's Cross (a name borrowed for reasonably well defined reasons from a township near Sydney).
- Scale 'em Corner.* A George Street corner, near Central Station, where appointments are made when they are intended to be broken.
- Seven Bob Beach.* Seven Shilling Beach.
- Shore.* North Shore Grammar School.
- Shore, the.* The North Shore suburbs. Also referred to as *up the line*.
- toast-rack.* An old-style footboard tram.³⁸
- Up King Street.* Bankrupt, penniless.
- Village, the.* Manly.
- Woolloomooloo Yank (Frenchman, etc.).* A local youth or man who pretends by his mannerisms and speech that he is a foreigner or has travelled. Also *Pymont Yank*.

³⁸ The use of *dog-boxes* to describe many carriages used on N.S.W. railways is equally expressive.

From Western Australia we get *Albany doctor* or *Fremantle doctor*, refreshing sea-breezes that blow after a hot day; *algy*,³⁹ seaweed, sewage and sludge found in the Swan River, Perth; *over the range*, meaning in the outback⁴⁰; *to do a gilgie*, to withdraw, back out of anything (from the name of a small fresh-water crayfish); *jumping jacks*, a derelict type of tram used in Kalgoorlie.

From Queensland and the Far North: *house blocks*, the long piles or foundations upon which houses in tropical areas are built; *stump caps*, protective caps of tin placed over house blocks to prevent attacks from white ants; *white Australians*, white plantation workers; *Afghanistan*,⁴¹ nickname for the east side of the township of Marree; *curry onion*, a resident of Cloncurry; *wongi*, a talk or conversation; *Ipswich*, a grey flannel shirt; *manilaman*, any native of the Indies; *kwee-ai*, a young lubra; *prospecting*, *comboing*, *gin shepherding* and *going on a gin spree*, taking to the bush in search of an aboriginal woman; *ox* and *stake*, an Italian; *blackfellow's delight*, rum; *C.S.R. port*, a seventy-pound sugar bag (C.S.R. stands for Colonial Sugar Refining Company); *T.I.*, Thursday Island; *hula bula*, a term of contempt, especially used in the form *hula bula bastard*; *peanut grower*, a resident of Cooktown; *burry*, an aboriginal; *wallaby day*, a day when country people go to town, often Saturday; *carol singer*, a police patrol car in Brisbane, from the name of Police Commissioner C. J. Carroll; and the following cane-cutters' expressions: *tram*, a section of cane burnt before cutting (only enough cane for two days' cutting is burnt at a time, otherwise it loses sugar content); *to tail chain*, to haul out full cane trucks over portable rails with horses; *floaters*, a piece of burning cane trash carried into the air by smoke when cane is being burnt off; *plucking*, the pulling of stray pieces of trash from a truck loaded with cane; *hairy mary*, hairs on the cabbage of the cane leaf; *cut*, the amount of cane to be cut.

From South Australia: *snickle*, a girl; *jack of*, tired of, fed up with; *dingdong!* and *pull the bell!* cant terms of disbelief; *illy illy oller*, a children's game in which this phrase is used as a cry; *blocker*, an owner of a vineyard, specifically, a block of land on which grapes are grown. *Parklands* is widely used

³⁹ From the Latin *algae*.

⁴⁰ i.e., over the Kimberley mountain range.

⁴¹ Afghan camel drivers are called *Ghans* in the Centre; the train running north to Alice Springs is also known as *the Ghan*.

in South Australia for public gardens and reserves, but is not current in other states.

From Victoria: *the Ballarat lantern*, a candle set in a bottle-neck; *trammy's cut*, a style of hair-cut (reported from Ballarat); *Lydiard Street farmer*, a dweller in Ballarat who takes only a remote town interest in life on the land; *Pivotonians*, residents of Geelong.

From New South Wales: *Auburn Street farmers*, nickname used by Goulburn farmers for residents of the town's "financial" street (in Sydney a business man with minor farming interests is called a *Pitt Street farmer*); *George Gerrard*, a lie (reported from Tamworth); *dahlia* and *tulip*, Albury measures of beer; *the Hill*, Broken Hill; *the Carillon City*, Bathurst.

Woop Woop and *Snake Gully*, as fictitious names for a remote outback settlement, the home of the most rustic of rustics, are also worth noting.

A common possession of Melbourne and Sydney is (or was) *the Block*. During the 1860s, when Australia was beginning to acquire some slim shadow of fashionable life in her main cities, certain popular promenades in Melbourne and Sydney became known as *the Block*. The term was applied originally in Melbourne to the section of Collins Street between Elizabeth and Swanston streets. This use still prevails. In Sydney, *the Block* was "that portion of the city bounded by King, George, Hunter and Pitt streets". Derivatives were *to do the Block*, to saunter or parade in the fashionable part of a city (an expression that has spread throughout Australia and New Zealand), and *blockists*, people who indulged in this pursuit. In old journals we find such references as "Saturday Block time", the fashionable hour for promenading (1896), "doing the block in Hereford Street" (1902), and a note on a tailor who "dressed the Block for many years" (1892).

It would be a mistake not to make some mention of the traditional competitiveness (sometimes almost amounting to downright enmity) between Melbourne and Sydney. This has erupted in several phrases that bid fair to remain permanently in the language. The Sydneyite boasts—not without good reason—of *Our Harbour* and *Our Bridge*,⁴² but beyond the borders of New South Wales these expressions are mainly used ironically,

⁴² Before the noted cricketer, D. G. Bradman, moved to Adelaide in the early 1930s it was a stock joke for Sydneyites to say that they

were "Three Hours" ahead of Melbourne. These were *Our Harbour*, *Our Bridge* and *Our Bradman*.

and as a riposte the Sydneyite refers to Melbourne's river as the *stinking Yarra* and, somewhat unjustifiably, alludes to the city as *Smellburn*.

4.—NOTABLE FIGURES

In the course of this book references have been made to various figures who have won for themselves a niche in our slang, such as Bishop Barker, John Furphy, Catherine Hayes, Lola Montez, Madame Bishop, D. G. Bradman, Ned Kelly, the politicians Curtin, Menzies and Spooner, Jimmy Woodser and Jack Smithers. The life of many of these expressions has usually been short, but some of them promise to retain national currency, such as *Jimmy Woodser*, a solitary drink, and *game as Ned Kelly*.

Here is a list of expressions commemorating various people and fictitious characters who, at different periods of our history, won themselves notability or notoriety:

Berry blight. "A reaction against the selfish and inconsiderate policy of the squatters when they were in power." Commemorating G. Berry, Victorian premier in the 1870s, who sought to break up large estates.⁴³

Braddon blot or *the Blot*. Political catchphrases which arose out of a Commonwealth constitutional enactment, introduced by Sir Edward Braddon, dealing with the distribution of customs and excise revenue.

britts up, to have the. To be alarmed. From "to have the wind up" and "have the sh—ts", by rhyming slang on the name of the former lightweight boxing champion of the world, Jimmy Britt, who was on vaudeville tour in Australia during World War No. 1. *To have the jimmies* is an extension.

Buckley's chance. One chance in a million or no chance at all. Especially used in the phrases *haven't a Buckley's* or *haven't Buckley's chance*. Perhaps commemorating a convict named Buckley who escaped to the bush in 1803 and lived with the aborigines for thirty-two years. An argument against this theory is that the expression did not become current until about 1898. It is suggested that it comes from a pun on the name of the Melbourne firm Buckley and Nunn, which would explain the currency of the Australian phrase, "There are just two chances, *Buckley's and none*", meaning that there are no chances at all.

Castieau's Hotel. An old name for Melbourne jail, commemorating an early governor, J. B. Castieau.

⁴³ Berry was responsible for one of the few dates commemorated in our slang, *black Wednesday*, 9 January 1878, a day on which wholesale dismissals of Victorian civil servants took place. This was "so-named as a

bitter parody on *black Thursday*", a day of disastrous bushfires in Victoria on 6 February 1851. The name *black Friday* was given to 13 January 1939 following bushfires in Victoria when 71 lives were lost.

- Carrington tooth powder.* Flour. Possibly referring to Baron Carrington, Governor of New South Wales from 1885 to 1890. (Bush slang recorded up to 1897.)
- Cazaly! up there.* A cry of encouragement. Commemorating a noted Victorian footballer named Cazaly.
- Charlie Dunn, give someone a.* To run a person out (especially of a two-up school) for cheating. Origin obscure.
- Charlie Forrester.* An oil stove. Shearers' slang of the 1890s "distorted from Charnwood Forrest—the kind of stove once used".
- Cobb.* A coach. Commemorating the firm of Cobb and Co., a business started in Victoria in 1853 by Freeman Cobb, J. M. Peck, J. Swanton and J. Lamber.
- Dad and Dave.* Two notable figures in the hierarchy of Australian popular literature and humour. They appeared first in A. H. Davis's "On Our Selection" (1899) and have been used for many years in a radio serial entitled "Dad and Dave".
- Dear Auntie or Dear Bill.* Phrases signifying utter weariness or disgust. According to W. H. Downing, "It implies the well-known text of a fictitious soldier's letter: 'Dear Auntie [or Dear Bill], This ain't no ordinary war. It's a bloody b—, and if you want to see your little Johnny again, get right down on your knees and pray like hell.'"
- dinnyhayser.* A heavy blow, a haymaker; anything extreme in action or notably good. Commemorating the pugilist Dinny Hayes.
- Firm, the.* The theatrical firm of J. C. Williamson Limited.
- Flying Pieman, the.* A notable Australian pedestrian, William King, who started a freak race vogue in 1848. In one effort he carried a 100-pound carriage pole in a race against the Brisbane-Ipswich coach. He finished the journey of twenty miles an hour ahead of the horses.
- Griffo, to fight like.* To fight brilliantly. Commemorating the noted Australian pugilist Albert Griffiths, born at Sofala, N.S.W.
- Hargrave box kite.* A type of kite invented, about 1900, by Lawrence Hargrave, Australian pioneer in aviation. (Not slang, but worthy of mention.)
- Hungry Tyson.* Nickname bestowed on the squatter James Tyson (1823-98), who "became during his lifetime one of the bush traditions of eastern Australia". Whence, *Tyson*, used to denote beef, in bush slang.
- Jacky Howe.* A short-sleeved shirt favoured by shearers. Jack Howe was a champion shearer of the 1890s. His tally of 320 sheep turned off the blades in eight hours, made at Alice Downs, Queensland, nearly fifty years ago, still stands as a world record.
- Jersey.* A red-headed person. Commemorating the red-haired Earl of Jersey, N.S.W. Governor, 1891-3. (Obsolete.)
- jo-jo.* Nickname for a bearded man. "So called from a hairy-faced Russian 'dog-man' exhibited in Melbourne about 1880, who was advertised by that name," says Morris. (Obsolete.)
- Kidman's joy or Kidman's blood mixture.* Treacle or golden syrup. Commemorating the late Sir Sidney Kidman, noted squatter.
- Lamington.* A Homburg hat, as worn by Baron Lamington, Queensland Governor, 1896-1901. (Obsolete.)

- Man in the Boxer Hat, the.* An anonymous heavy backer who made some big "killings" on Australian racecourses during the 1930s. (A *boxer* is a bowler hat.)
- Mel drumites.* Followers of a theory of art propounded by David Max Meldrum, of Melbourne; also known as the *Meldrum school*.
- Mrs Freer Weed.* Nickname given to a weed known as Paterson's Curse (*Echium vulgare*). Derived from the part played by a Federal Minister named Paterson, in October 1936, in banning from Australia an oversea visitor, Mrs G. Freer, who was eventually allowed to enter the country in July 1937.
- Mules operation.* An operation performed on a sheep to prevent fly-strike. Two folds of skin under the thighs are removed. This checks the extent of urine wetting which attracts flies. The operation was first suggested in 1931 by J. H. W. Mules, grazier of Woodside, South Australia.
- Nunawading Messiah.* Andrew Fisher, of Nunawading, Victoria, who declared himself the Messiah. His sect of a hundred followers was polygamous and he took three sisters as his wives (21 June, 1871).
- Oakes' oath.* An unreliable affirmation of honesty. An extremely old expression, as shown by G. H. Haydon, in "The Australian Emigrant" (1854), wherein a person says he will "chance it, like Major Oakes did". Who this Major Oakes was remains obscure. In the "Bulletin" of 28 September 1901, a writer says that the expression, "I'll chance it, as Oakes did his oath", "refers to one Oakes, a Parramatta celebrity, who, tradition tells, was prosecuting a man for cattle-stealing. Evidence showed that the prisoner had a pair of horns in his possession and Oakes was asked if he could swear that the horns belonged to any beast of his. He hesitated for a space, then suddenly burst out, 'Well, I'll chance it! Yes!'"
- Sing 'em muck.* A "famous saying" alleged to have been uttered by Dame Nellie Melba, the noted Australian singer (affectionately known as *Nellie*).
- Smithy.* The late Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, noted aviator. His reference to his planes as *the old bus* was also widely known.
- Trickett.* A long drink of beer. Commemorating Edward Trickett, Australian professional champion sculler in 1875 and world champion from 1876 to 1880. (Obsolete.)
- Whitely King.* "A billy fashioned from a fruit tin, so-named from the secretary of the Pastoralists' Union who, during the shearing troubles, sent out bands of non-unionists furnished with these impromptu utensils."—"Bulletin", 1 February 1902. (Obsolete.)
- Wild White Man, the.* A convict named Buckley who lived with aborigines for thirty-two years, from 1803 to 1835. He is commemorated in the title of a book by J. Bonwick (1856). The "Australian Encyclopaedia" (1926) has a section devoted to *Wild White Men*, as a generic title for "*white blackfellows*".

Through the influence of the bushranger Ned Kelly any male possessing the name Kelly is invariably nicknamed *Ned*. In the same way a Paterson or Patterson earns the nickname *Banjo*

from the popular Australian poet A. B. Paterson who styled himself *The Banjo*. An Allen is often nicknamed *Barney* from a once noted bookmaker, Barney Allen.

Other popular Australian nicknames are *Ginge*⁴⁴ and *Bluey*,⁴⁵ for a red-haired person, *Chiller*, for Charles, and a large number of hypocoristic forms which employ the *-o* suffix, such as *Jimmo*, *Tommo*, *Billo*, *Johnno*, *Sallo*, *Daiso*, *Freddo*, *Betto*.

⁴⁴ The cartoon strip character *Ginger Meggs*, created by Jimmy Bancks, and known throughout the world, has helped to popularize this abbreviation.

⁴⁵ Another well-known strip is *Bluey and Curley*, by Gurney, which retails the humorous adventures of two Australian soldiers in World War No. 2.

CHAPTER XI

CHILDREN

I.—FASHIONS AND GAMES

THE world of children is refreshingly simple. Their likes and dislikes are clear-cut, their enthusiasms whole-hearted, their aversions decided. Within these limitations, which are not darkened by adult complexes other than perhaps by wholesome envy of the expert, they are lusty practitioners of slang at its best.

Their story, so far as it affects the Australian language, is relatively short, but it has an atmosphere of positiveness about it that is at once delightful and vigorous.

Few Australian writers can handle the child as deftly as Norman Lindsay. His best work in child literature is "Saturdee" (1933), but he provides us with some extraordinarily fine glimpses of the youthful mind in his "Redheap" (1930), "Miracles by Arrangement" (1932), and "Flyaway Highway" (1936). His child's book, "The Magic Pudding" (1918), reveals his talent for writing in a way that is not only a delight to children, but an amusement for adults.

Some of his uses of slang will be referred to subsequently.

It is impossible, of course, to be arbitrary in saying where child slang begins and where it ends. Many adult terms are used by them, just as many of the terms favoured by children have found their way into popular speech. Most of the expressions for notable or excellent things—such as *curl*, *curl-the-mo*, *dazzler*, *dinker*, *caster*, *bottler*, *whopcacker*, *rube*, *snodger*, *grouse* (these were dealt with in Chapter VI, section 4)—are used mainly by young people although they frequently find their way into print.

There is, for instance, an old chant favoured by children, *Give a thing, take a thing, is a blackfellow's plaything!* addressed to a child who wants the return of something he has given away. On 15 December 1939, it found its way into the

New South Wales Workers' Compensation Court on the lips of Judge Perdriau who rendered it, "Give a thing and take a thing, is a bad man's plaything!" So we cannot lay down too stringent laws about the scope of child speech or impose too many limitations upon it.

This would be difficult in any case, because child slang is subject to an infinite variety of fashions and quirks; faulty hearing causes many mutilations, imagination is liable to step in and produce a word that will be immediately forgotten. Thus a child who cannot recall the word "oars" concocts *wavers* to fill the breach, calls a traymobile a *dinner pram*, a bookshelf a *book shelter*, and, having misheard the word "windmill", calls it a *windwheel*, because the concepts of wind and wheel are known, and that of mill is unknown. In a similar fashion the child misinterprets speech because of the contest between known and unknown concepts, and will ask "Why will a man *bite* a dog?" when its parent produces the hackneyed nonsense about "going to see a man about a dog".

In this way a good deal of purely domestic parlance arises, often confined to single families and rarely graduating to the status of general nursery slang. This type of speech is obviously outside our ambit.

There are, however, numerous avenues in which children's inventions become relatively stabilized, especially in their games. Some expressions are difficult to fix exactly because they fill a general utility role, such as *doubler* which a child will use in a multitude of ways. For instance, a *doubler* may indicate two children on one swing, or two swings fixed together, or two children sliding down a slippery-dip, or four children on a seesaw (two at each end) or two children riding on one scooter or bicycle, and so on. This is slang in a formative state.

A game like marbles provides us with better established examples. Marbles of one kind and another are known to Australian children as *bottleys*, *bottle-ohs*, *cornies*, *cornelians*, *chows*, *dakes*, *doblars*, *conks*, *commos*, *stinkies*, *stonkers*, *dibs*, *peewees*, *glassies*, *immas* and *smokies*. Games played include *any-every*, *big ring*, *little ring*, *follow on*, *eyesie* and *eyedrop*. The *fat* is the ring in which marbles are played; a *funnick* is a shot in which the hand encroaches inside the ring; *moz* is an expression used when the rules of the particular game allow a line to be drawn across an opponent's path to distract him (we have a colloquial use of *moz* and *mozzle*, to interrupt or hinder; and

to *put the moz—or mock—on someone*, to inconvenience or put a hoodoo on a person).

In "Saturdee" Lindsay uses numerous examples of marbles slang, notably *milky*, *Frenchy*, *peewee*, *slatey* and *eyedrop*, and refers to other children's games such as *egg-cap*, *duckstone*, *stag knife* and *nick-nocking*.

He calls a catapult a *shot-ging*. Other popular terms to describe this essential weapon of all healthy boys are *ging*, *gog-eye*, *dinger*, *shong*, *wong* and *shanghai*,¹ the last being the oldest and best-known of the group.

A stone is a *cundy*, *yinnie*, *brick* or *brinny*; to throw is *to bish*, *biff* or *peg* (this comes from English dialect); fireworks of various kinds are *bungdungs*, *bungers*, *backrackers* and *stink-pots*; food is known under the generic titles of *chew* or *scrunch*.¹ Chewing-gum is called *chutty* and from this word the child has produced a servicable verb *to chut*. When chewing-gum is of an inferior quality a child says, "It won't *chut* properly."

In his "Timely Tips to New Australians" Jice Doone refers to *I-ackee*, "a children's game, resembling out-of-doors hide-and-seek in which the word is used as a cry". Another popular exclamation is *baldy!* which is the equivalent of the English *fain I!* or *fainits!* implying a formula of refusal. It probably comes from the English dialectal *barley*, "an exclamation frequently used by children in their games when they wish to obtain a short exemption from the laws of the amusement in which they are occupied". *Barley!* is also used by Australian children and is frequently clipped to *bar!*

As already pointed out, much child slang is subject to fashions; in addition a good deal of it is localized. A chant such as the following—recorded in the "Bulletin" of 12 March 1898—would obviously be limited to use among children living in or near the Sydney areas mentioned:

Johnny and Jane and Jack and Lou,
Butler's Stairs through Woolloomooloo,
Woolloomooloo and 'cross the Domain,
Round the Block and home again.
Heigh ho! tipsy toe,
Give us a kiss and away we go!

But it is still worth recording, since it provides evidence that Australian children have developed and are developing customs and games distinctly their own.

¹ First used about 1860; from it come the colloquial uses of *within a shanghai shot*, *to shanghai a stone*, *to get shanghai'd from a horse*.

2.—SCHOOL SLANG

Practically every school possesses some peculiarities of child parlance, although these are not easy for the adult to collect. I offer, as an example of healthy Australian inventiveness, the following list of expressions used by children in a well-known Victorian school—a list which was compiled by a teacher after many months of patient listening:

- bid*. A maid or waitress. Hence, *king of the bids*, the head waitress.
- blear, to*. To go about in a state of unawareness, "it carries with it a sense of psychological as well as physical unawareness". Thus: "There was Snooty *blearing* along"; "He *bleared* into the hall and forgot to say grace."
- brinnies*. Stones. Thus: "We got six for throwing *brinnies* on the grid shed [i.e. bicycle shed]."
- cemetery*. The sanitary wing. Thus: "I left my sweater in the *cemetery*."
- date!* Used when a person makes an inaccurate or stupid statement which is proved wrong, or when a ruse doesn't come off. Thus: "*Date!* Brown, your number is up!"
- dirty big*. An expletive similar to bloody or blooming. Thus: "He's a *dirty big* slacker", "I got a *dirty big* cut on my leg."
- fanny*.² A nurse or house matron. Thus: "We've got a new *fanny* this term", meaning a new matron.
- fish; to catch a fish*. Anger; to be the subject of another's ire. Thus: To be *in a fish*, to be in a temper; "I'll *catch a fish* if I don't finish my prep."
- fug-up*. A stodgy person, one who prefers a "fuggy" atmosphere to playing out-of-doors.
- ice-drill*. Physical exercises when conducted in shorts only. Thus: "Who's having us for *ice-drill*?"
- jack*. An expert, a notable person. Thus: "He's a real *jack* at music"; "Smith is one of the *jacks* of the school."
- jackish*. Noteworthy, distinctive. Thus: "Bolter played a *jackish* innings"; "That's a *jackish* bit of carving."
- K.O.J.* Enthusiastic, over-earnest, short for "keen on the job". Thus: "He's much too *K.O.J.* for me."
- mum*. A mollycoddle, effeminate boy. Thus: "You poor *mum*, why didn't you come for a swim this morning?"
- poon up, to*. To dress up, especially with considerable care. Thus: "Jim is all *pooned up* to go out."
- pop out!* Wake up! Come out of your coma! Thus: "*Pop out*, we won the boat race two years ago!"
- ronnies*.³ Stones. Thus: "We rocked Kelly's roof, and did the *ronnies* rattle!"

² In English military slang during World War No. 1, *fanny* was used for a member of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry.

³ Probably from English dialect *roundy*, a lump of coal, and old English cant *rouny*, a potato.

- serves their rights*. A solecism for "serves them right". Thus: "Well, *serves their rights* if they get caught, going out without leave."
- slacks*. An aperient. Thus: "Matron made me take *slacks* this morning."
- surl*. Used as a noun and verb, derived from "surlly". Thus: "He was in a terrible *surl*," in a rage; "And did he *surl* at us! I'll say!"
- tarze*. A notable, especially a physically strong person. From "Tarzan". Thus: "He's a *tarze*, that fellow."
- tarzy, tarzanish*. Descriptive of a strong person or work that requires strength to complete. Thus: "He's a pretty *tarzy* chap"; "That's a *tarzanish* (or *tarzy*) job by the look of it."
- tit around, to*. To fuss unnecessarily, to be busy about nothing, to interfere. Thus: "There he goes, *titting around* with his bits and pieces."
- twirgle*. One's turn. Thus: "I haven't had a *twirgle* at the lathe yet"; "Here, give me a *twirgle*, you've had one for long enough."
- twit*. A term of contempt. Thus: "You poor *twit*!" Whence, a verb, *to twit about*, a synonym for *tit around, q.v.*
- yegg*. An objectionable fellow (from the U.S. *yegg*, a burglar). Thus: "Oh, he's a *yegg*, mucking about all the time."

An important point to be noted about this type of slang is that it is often ephemeral; in many cases it will retain a currency of only a few weeks and then may be laid aside completely, or revived after a period of months or even years.

Here are a few general expressions concerned with school life: *impot*, an imposition or task of work; *eccer*, homework (from "exercise"); *to pot someone* or *to put someone's pot on*, to inform on; *biffs, cuts* and *swipes*, corporal punishment; *to get tonked*, to receive corporal punishment; and *knee-drill*, a form of punishment in which children are made to kneel in certain denominational schools.⁴

Conky,⁵ worthless, objectionable; *custards*, pimples; *dippy*, a comic paper; and *hangashun, hangava*⁶ and *hellishun*, used as intensives are also current mainly among schoolchildren.

By jinks! and *by jingies!* are Australian variants of the English "by jingo!" The jeer *hooya!* seems to have been derived originally from a corruption of "Who are you?"

Among nursery expressions which have acquired a fairly stabilized currency in this country are *googy-egg* for an egg; *to see Mrs Murray*, to urinate or defecate; *big fire* and *little fire*, which describe defecation and urination respectively; and the catchphrase, *up to pussy's bow and dolly's wax*, to denote a surfeit, especially of food.

⁴ *Knee-drill*, kneeling for prayers, is in English slang.

⁵ *Onkus* and *honkus* were noted earlier.

⁶ Properly, *hang of a*, a euphemism for *hell of a*.

CHAPTER XII

FLORA AND FAUNA

1.—CONFLICTS AND CATACHRESIS

ONE of the most patent weaknesses of Morris's "Austral English" was his overloading of that dictionary with purely botanical or zoological material. This could possibly have fallen into its right place if Morris had also devoted greater attention to Australian colloquial speech and so given a more balanced picture of the Australian lingual scene. As the "Bulletin" wrote in its critique:

The dictionary is mixed. Names of plants and animals run in alphabetical order with the Australian *words* which the dictionary professes to connote and explain. There are often whole pages of botanical references and descriptions borrowed from Maiden or Von Mueller or others. Without these and similar lists of fishes, birds, and so on, the dictionary would have been a much less imposing volume. Yet it is not clear why botany and philology should be confused. But since it was decided to include lists of animals and plants, with their vernacular names—and these lists, in a popular pan-Australasian form, were certainly much needed—why were not plants and animals listed separately from words included for linguistic and national reasons? It seems as if almost everything in clarity and convenience was to be gained, and hardly anything lost, by such separate classification.

Wrote the Melbourne "Argus":

If we were disposed to quarrel with any portion of the contents of the dictionary it would be with the inclusion of some of the scientific terms for species, which are not Austral English, because they are not English anywhere, but merely serve as the private labels of scientists.

These comments raise some points that should be stressed, not only because Morris's listings of flora and fauna are now out-of-date, but because his approach to the problem of the Australasian language was faulty.

If it were worth while to include all indigenous scientific

terminology the dictionary would obviously, by sheer weight of natural objects unique to this part of the world, become largely encyclopaedic. This is all very well in the case of the "Oxford Dictionary", where the whole scope of the English language is taken into account. But Australia has made only limited contributions to the English language—limited, that is, to thousands, not tens of thousands. Common and scientific names of flora and fauna are accordingly in greater proportion to the Australian language than they are to English. Morris found it simple to take scientific terminology from the works of various authorities on Australian flora and fauna; he did not find it so easy—or he felt disinclined—to make a personal study of Australian colloquial speech.

To a certain extent Morris recognized this weakness. Commenting on the inclusion of scientific words in his dictionary he said: "It is quite true that these can hardly be described as Australasian English."

A dictionary of Australian flora and fauna, complete with scientific terms, is certainly needed. But this work should be kept apart from Australian colloquialisms and slang. The great bulk of our colloquial speech is not yet standardized, whereas scientific terms tend to become fixed immediately. To mix them is to present a hotchpotch of material that is as unsatisfying to the person who desires a purely scientific reference as to the person who desires a reference to our common speech.

G. P. Marsh sums up the American position on flora and fauna in his "Lectures on the English Language" (1860):

The native names for all these objects were hard to pronounce, harder still to remember, and the colonists, therefore, took the simple and obvious method of applying to the native products of America the names of the European plants and animals which most resembled them. . . . Though the American and the transatlantic object designated by these names in many instances belong to the same genus, and are only distinguished by features which escape all eyes but those of the scientific naturalist, in perhaps none are they specifically identical, while, not unfrequently, the application of the European name is founded on very slight resemblances.

The same story is to be told about Australia. Aboriginal names were ignored, imported terms were falsely applied—e.g. *alligator* instead of crocodile, *badger* for the bandicoot or wombat, *iguana* for the varan, *lobster* for crayfish, *locust* for cicada, *mimosa* for acacia—and vast numbers of varying species were wrongly grouped together because of careless observation.

Here is an editorial comment on the problem by the "Bulletin" of 3 January 1907:

When the early settlers undertook the task of naming Australian birds and animals, why on earth couldn't they have adopted more of the aboriginal names? . . . In how many cases has a real or fancied resemblance to something with which they were acquainted given rise to names nearly always misleading, often ridiculous! Surely *koala* is better than the absurd "native bear" and *kookaburra* than that verbal monstrosity "laughing jackass".¹ . . . Then, again, we call the piping crow-shrike a *magpie*, which it is not: what's wrong with the native name *karoo*? Why must we borrow the name *opossum* from a perfectly distinct American animal and apply it to what the aboriginals called the *kooragai*? We all know that an *emu* is not an ostrich, yet emu is but a slight corruption of the Portuguese name of the ostrich; why not use the aboriginal *marriang*? Finally, to refer to the huge lizard . . . why can't he have a name of his own? He is called an *iguana* or a *go-anner*² when he is no more an iguana than an emu is an ostrich. Scientists call him a varan, South Australian blacks a *kojurrie*. Either name is more suitable than iguana.

Other aspects of the problem were discussed by a writer in "The Lone Hand", who commented on the "wholesale and promiscuous borrowing of old names" for our flora and fauna:

Turning to Australian flora, we find ourselves in a veritable maze of tangled nomenclature. In the first place, the two most important genera of our forest trees bear vernacular names which are not really distinctive at all. Any tree whose branches are suitable for "wattling" or weaving that rough wickerwork which has for so many generations been used in rural England for fence- and hut-building, might lay claim to the name of *wattle-tree*, while *gum-tree* merely connotes an abundance of exuded sap, which in the eucalypti is not really gum in the ordinary sense of the word, but kino. But when we come to separate species, the popular terminology is simply bewildering. To the ordinary man in the street, the common distinctions of red, white and blue *gum*, etc., may seem clear enough, but when he learns that the name "blue gum" is applied to at least eight species of eucalyptus, "red" to ten, and "white" to fifteen, and that, further, in most cases each species has several different vernacular names, he will begin to realise the state of confusion which really exists. Nor is this confusion confined to popular nomenclature. Mr Maiden gives a list of eight or nine different botanical synonyms for the *Eucalyptus amygdalina*, a tree which is variously known in different places as peppermint, mountain ash, giant gum,

¹ Commenting on the term *laughing jackass*, "The Lone Hand" (3 November 1908) said: "Familiarity has blunted our perception of the atrocity of this combination, but compare it with such an equally applicable invention as 'grinning tom-cat', or 'smiling billy-goat' and see the result!"

² Since the true iguana is not

found in Australia, the term *goanna* has now been adopted as an independent name for the Australian monitor. In various forms the word *goanna* has been in Australian use for more than a century. Here are some examples: *guanoes* (1802), *guana* (1830), *guaners* (1858), *goanna* (1891), *gohanna* (1896). The abbreviation *go* is also common.



s s si so sa su se
is os as us es

san sor ais su-sa
son sos isi mais rais nus
sa-man Si-mon so-ri mi-sa Ro-sa
Ma-nus si-sis wi-nis re-sis

o l a l s o s t t l l s k



au



aun aum aur aus
nau mau rau wau
nau aur Wau mau mais Ma-nus

sa-man raus saur si-sis re-sis
so-ri mais rais saur
i-si mi-sa wi-nis rais sos su-sa

t l l l s s t t l l s k

l l li le la lo lu
il el al ol ul
lai lau
ail lau



les lai lus sel sol nil rel
se-lo Le-o la-la lain mu-li
lo-ri A-li wil-wil ma-lo-lo
wi-sil na-mel ol-sem la-lai
lu-lu-ai Ma-la-lc ma-lu-ma-lu

t t t t t t t t t t t t t t t t

CHILDREN'S BOOK WITH PIDGIN

Two pages from a school primer used at some New Guinea mission stations in teaching young natives how to read and write pidgin English.

white gum, stringybark, manna gum and messmate. Even allowing a distinctively Australian character to have been acquired by the names *gum* and *wattle*, it must be admitted that such recklessly imported terms as ash, apple, beech, box, cedar, oak, maple, sassafras, teak and hickory, applied in most cases without reference to any botanical relationships, cannot fail to be misleading. Certainly, a small aboriginal element has been retained in our marvellous system of forest nomenclature, but even here exact definition is sometimes wanting—*mulga* and *brigalow* being applied to several different acacias, while *mallee* is not rigidly confined to any one species of eucalyptus.

In fine, it may be said that our popular zoological nomenclature has suffered both by the spontaneity of its growth and the conservatism of its originators. The early settler seemed determined alike to ignore the aboriginal name and to avoid any tax on his inventive faculties, and so went on tacking English, American and Asiatic names on to bird, beast, fish and tree. The result is that his descendant of today believes that in the black and white crow-shrike he sees a genuine *magpie*, that our phalanger is the original *possum up a gumtree*, and even that the root of a purple-flowered vine, which brightens the hillsides and gullies in the spring season, has medicinal qualities, because it has annexed the name of *sarsaparilla*.

Here, then, is a fairly accurate summary of what has happened to our flora and fauna. We find it a field full of anomalies, inexactitudes and confusions. The sooner we have an authoritative dictionary of Australian flora and fauna, which will include the hundreds of terms which Morris omitted and which will give some guidance to the public on the use of indigenous instead of imported expressions, the better it will be.

2.—POPULAR BIRD-NAMES

One of the problems with which we are confronted in any study of our flora and fauna is the multiplicity of names—common and popular—possessed by some species. Our birds have been made especial victims of this duplication.

For instance, the Grey-crowned Babbler is known also as the *apostle-bird*, *barker*, *cat-bird*, *cackler*, *codlin-moth-eater*, *chatterer*, *dog-bird*, *happy family*, *happy jack*, *hopper*, *juniper*, *parson-bird*, *pine-bird*, *twelve apostles* and *yahoo*.

The White-fronted Chat is also called the *ballyhead*, *banded tintac*, *bumps*, *clipper*, *dotterel*, *gar*, *jenny wren*, *moonbird*, *nun*, *ringlet*, *ringneck* and *tang*.

The Brown Flycatcher is called *jacky winter*, *peter-peter*, *post-boy*, *post sitter* and *spinks*.

Some of these are, fairly obviously, direct alternatives for the common name, but others are of the vernacular type that comes within the scope of this book.

Perhaps the point will be better understood if we take the kookaburra as an example and note the many names by which it is known in familiar speech. The common appellation *laughing jackass* dates from 1798 or before and, as will be seen in the following list, many of our popular nicknames for the bird are variants of this: *jack, jacko, jacky, jackass, laughing jack, laughing john, laughing johnny, laughing johnass, john, johnny, clock bird, bushman's clock, shepherd's clock, alarm bird, breakfast bird, kooka, ha ha pigeon* and *woop woop pigeon*.³

These are clearly of a popular type, the products of fancy and imagination, well worthy of a place alongside Australianisms in general.

Here is a list of some of the more colourful nicknames for Australian birds; the list is by no means complete, but it is at least representative:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <i>Australian nightingale.</i> The Willie Wagtail. | <i>monk.</i> Noisy Friar-bird. |
| <i>baldy.</i> White-headed Pigeon. | <i>mourner.</i> Grey Shrike-thrush. |
| <i>black-and-white duck.</i> A magpie. | <i>pick-it-up.</i> Diamond-bird. |
| <i>bleater.</i> Australian Snipe. | <i>pimlico.</i> Noisy Friar-bird. |
| <i>brain fever.</i> Pallid Cuckoo. | <i>pluff.</i> Grey Shrike-thrush. |
| <i>bubbly mary.</i> Wompoo Pigeon. | <i>poor soldier.</i> Noisy Friar-bird. |
| <i>budgie.</i> Popular abbreviation of Budgerigar. | <i>razor grinder.</i> Restless Flycatcher. |
| <i>chickoowee.</i> White-plumed Honey-eater. | <i>ring coachman.</i> Rufous Whistler. |
| <i>chickup.</i> Yellow-faced Honey-eater. | <i>scissors grinder.</i> Restless Flycatcher. |
| <i>cranky fan.</i> Grey Fantail. | <i>shepherd's companion.</i> Willie Wagtail. |
| <i>dishlick.</i> Restless Flycatcher. | <i>smoker.</i> Regent Parrot. |
| <i>flying coachman.</i> Regent Honey-eater. | <i>snapper.</i> Grey Fantail. |
| <i>four o'clock.</i> Noisy Friar-bird. | <i>spiney.</i> Spinebill. |
| <i>go-away.</i> White-browed Babbler. | <i>squatter.</i> Bronze-wing Pigeon. |
| <i>goolie</i> or <i>goulie.</i> Galah. | <i>squeaker.</i> Noisy Miner. |
| <i>greeny.</i> White-plumed Honey-eater. | <i>stinker.</i> Blue-winged Shoveller. |
| <i>grinder.</i> Restless Flycatcher. | <i>stop-where-you-are.</i> Friar-bird. |
| <i>kelly.</i> A crow. | <i>tobacco box.</i> Friar-bird. |
| <i>knobby nose.</i> Noisy Friar-bird. | <i>twenty-eight.</i> Yellow-collared Parakeet. |
| <i>leatherhead.</i> Noisy Friar-bird. | <i>what's o'clock.</i> Wattle-bird. |
| <i>mad fan.</i> Grey Fantail. | <i>whisky.</i> Yellow-tufted Honey-eater. |
| <i>micky.</i> Noisy Miner. | <i>yellow bob.</i> Southern Yellow Robin. |
| | <i>yelper.</i> Red-necked Avocet. |

A bird-name which is often mistaken for an aboriginal word is *rosella*, for the parrot *Platycercus eximius*. The word was cor-

³ Applied to the Swamp Pheasant in North Queensland.

rupted from *Rosehill*, a district near Sydney where the bird was first observed.

A domestic bird that appears to be of distinct Australian origin is the *Australorp*, a well-known utility type of Black Orpington fowl. Since about 1900 it has been the most popular heavy breed in Australasia and is now well-known abroad. The bird is not a cross-bred Orpington, but the pure strain which has succeeded well in Australia and New Zealand.

3.—ANIMALS, INSECTS, ETC.

A number of popular expressions have come to us from Australian animals, although it will be seen that many of these concern that unique creature the kangaroo. Best known of these and related terms are *roo*, *kanga*, *boomer*, *joey*, *old man* and *paddymelon*.

Boomer, descriptive of a fully-grown kangaroo, has been current since 1830 or earlier. It is probably derived from Tasmanian aboriginal, although Morris suggests that it may hail from the verb *to boom*, to rush with violence. We have put the word to numerous colloquial uses, notably to describe anything especially large or significant. A writer of 1856 refers, for instance, to "a *boomer* of a flea". A particularly ambitious lie is also called a *boomer*.

A somewhat similar destiny has met the original use of *old man* to denote a large fully-grown kangaroo. (A rare version, *old woman*, for an adult female kangaroo, is recorded in 1861.) Anything especially large or notable can earn the attributive use of *old man*, as, for instance, "an *old man* allotment" (1845) and "an *old man* southerly", a heavy southerly gale.

Joey, a baby kangaroo, has also been given extensive popular meanings. The young of other animals—especially opossums—are called *joey*s, and from this the meaning has been extended to apply to young children. A woman who is pregnant is said to *carry a joey*. In the same way as *boomer* has come to describe a notable lie, *joey* is used to denote a minor lie or evasion.

Whiptail, a small kangaroo, *flier* and *brush flier*, a swift kangaroo, *blue flier*, the female of the Forester or Red Kangaroo, *pretty face*, a small kangaroo, *soldier*, a fully-grown animal, and *brusher*, a small wallaby, can also be noted.

According to Morris, *paddymelon*, a small wallaby, has been derived by the law of Hobson-Jobson from the aboriginal *petagorang*, but the evidence is by no means conclusive. However,

paddymalla is recorded in 1826, and *paddymelon stick*, a stick used by aborigines for killing wallabies, in 1851. The name is often abbreviated to *melon*, this making its appearance in the derivative *melon hole*, a shallow hole in open country, dangerous to horsemen, which the wallaby is alleged to make.

The native bear—at various times in our history maligned by the names *monkey* and *bear*—is now known mainly as *koala*, although it is often referred to affectionately as *teddy bear* and *Billy Bluegum*. *Bunyip Bluegum* is the name given to the koala hero in Norman Lindsay's "Magic Pudding".

Various Australian lizards are known in popular speech as the *bloodsucker*, *bluey*, *barker*, *land mullet*, *mallee trout*, *railway lizard* and *stumptail*. Our only colloquial names for snakes seem to be *boody* and the rhyming slang *Joe Blake*.

A camel is an *oont*⁴ or a *humpy*; a crocodile is *gator*, *crocky* or *scaly*; a flying-fox is a *hairy devil*; a dingo is called ironically a *shepherd's friend*; and *longlegs* is a nickname given to the hare.

So far as popular naming goes, our main attention in the insect world has been focused on ants and cicadas, for which we have concocted a fairly representative group of terms.

For ants some of our oldest names are *old soldier* (1840), *light horseman* (1844), *colonial bulldog* (1852), *soldier* (1854) and *bulldog* (1878). We also have the following names for ants of various types: *bully*, *elevator*, *incher*, *inchman* (Morris says this was an old Tasmanian use), *greeny*, *red incher*, *black incher* and *blue incher*.

Most noted among our appellations for cicadas are: *baker*, *floury baker*, *floury miller*, *cad*, *green monday*, *yellow monday*, *miller*, *mealyback*, *red eye* and *double drummer*.

Fiddleback, a beetle, *fortylegs*,⁵ a millipede, and *dicky rice*, a citrus fruit-tree weevil, are a few nicknames applied to Australian insects.

Popular fish-names peculiar to the Australian include: *brim*, for bream; *couta*, for barracouta; *cotton-fish* and *tit-fish*, for trepang; *nipper*, a prawn (it may be noted that raw prawns are referred to as *green prawns*, probably because a cooked prawn is always pink or red); *beaky*, a garfish; *bluebottle*, a Portuguese man-of-war; *pig-faced lady*, a boar fish; *puddingball*, corrupted by the law of Hobson-Jobson from the aboriginal *puddinba*; *nigger*, a blackfish; and *yabby*, a small crayfish, which has given

⁴From Hindustani, to be found in Kipling's "Barrack Room Ballads".

⁵Used in seventeenth century English dialect for a centipede.

us a verb *to yabby* and a verbal noun *yabbing*, used especially among children.

Many confusions occur in Australian fish nomenclature. For instance, the fish known as *salmon*, *newfish* or *buck* to N.S.W. fishermen is often called *salmon-trout* in Victoria, South Australia and Westralia, *native salmon* in Tasmania, and *kahawai* or *Sydney salmon* in New Zealand. The *common trevally* or *silver* of N.S.W. is often called *silver bream* in Victoria and South Australia, *trevally*, *trevalla* or *skipjack* in Westralia, and *silver trevally* in Tasmania. Fishermen in Victoria and South Australia give the name *yellowtail* to the fish which is known in other States as *kingfish*. The small *yanga* or *bung* of Sydney and nearby waters is also known as *yellowtail*, however, and an additional complication arises in the fact that the great *jewfish* of Sydney is known in Victoria and South Australia as *kingfish*.

These and similar conflicts in nomenclature which occur in many branches of Australia's flora and fauna await attention from scientific authorities. It would not be out of place for the Government to give a lead in the matter of straightening out these confusions.

4.—FLORA

Among Australianisms developed from the field of our flora is *wattle* (already dealt with), which has given us derivatives in *wattle-bark*, *wattle-bark stripping* and *wattle-stripper*. *Lignum* is an Australian colloquial version of *polygonum*; *prickly moses*,⁶ a corruption or elaboration of *mimosa*; *bang alley*, a version of the aboriginal *bangalay*; *never greens*, a semi-humorous description for our eucalypts, the pun being on the word "ever-greens".

Among popular names for various trees noted by Morris were *Jemmy Donnelly*, *Jimmy Low* and *Roger Gough* (all of them used apparently with little reason), *axebreaker* and *leatherjacket*. He also records *Major Groce* and *Major Grocer* as names for a fruit of the geebung tribe, and points out that *jil-a-crow-berry* is an English corruption of the aboriginal name for a species of grass.

An important point stressed by Morris is that the versions *ti-tree* and *ti-tri* are quite erroneous for the tea-tree. This mis-

⁶ This is the accepted common name of the *Acacia juniperina*.

take is made continually in print in this country and should be weeded out along with other popular lapses.

Additional items noted by Morris include: *bull's wool*, the fibrous inner portion of the bark of the stringybark tree; *traveller's grass* and *settler's twine*, a fibre plant; *settler's matches*, long pendulous strips of bark that hang from eucalypts, used as kindling for fires; *melitose*, an isomeric sugar; *lerp*, an aboriginal word meaning sweet, applied to a kind of manna secreted by an insect, which has given its name to the chemical substance *lerpamillum* derived from it; *dumplings*, the apple-berry, fruit of an Australian shrub; *job's tears*, seeds of *Coix lachryma*, used for necklace-making by natives in the far north; *mulga apple*, a gall formed on the mulga-tree; and *palberry*, the Native Currant, a corruption of the aboriginal *palbri*.

A few minor colloquialisms worthy of inclusion are *black-fellow's bread*, sclerotia of *Polyporus mylittae*, rounded lumps varying in size from a pin's head to a human head, often found near decaying stumps or roots of eucalypts; *cheeses*, fruit capsules of the White Beech; and *lady's fingers*, a variety of table grape grown in South Australia.⁷

5.—IDIOMATIC APPLICATIONS

During an earlier examination of bush idiom it was pointed out that numerous similes and metaphors had been evolved round some of our birds and animals, such as *miserable as a bandicoot*, *mad as a goanna*, and *mad as a gum-tree full of galahs*.

Our flora and fauna have been put to use in an even simpler form than this, in an effective but economically descriptive fashion, by applying certain words to human beings. Thus we employ words like *geebung*, *stringybark*, *bunyip*,⁸ *galah* and *dingo* in a derogatory or contemptuous sense. In 1852 G. C. Mundy, in "Our Antipodes", noted that *bunyip* "became and remains a Sydney synonym for impostor, pretender, humbug and the like". Earlier R. Howitt ("Australia", 1845) used *more-*

⁷ *Lady's finger* was used a century ago to describe a hardy type of potato in Australia ("Voice From the Bush", 1899; W. Curry and Company, Dublin) and towards the 1900s was applied also to a short, thin banana in Queensland slang. The term is also used in Natal,

South Africa, for a "small, delicately-flavoured banana".

⁸ The *bunyip* is a fabulous aboriginal animal supposed to haunt swampy areas and lake regions in outback Australia. Serious attempts to establish its existence have failed. It varies in size and shape according to the imagination of its describers.

pork to describe a simpleton or dull-witted person. Tom Collins also applied the term to a person in "Such is Life".

Bandicoot is used somewhat similarly when applied to a person. Thus J. I. Hunt wrote in 1889⁹ of "this ole pumpkin-headed *bandicoot* ov a pos'man".

In like fashion people of outback areas have found it serviceable to develop a number of idiomatic expressions. Thus, *cockatoo*, which later became the highly-useful *cocky*, was used to describe a farmer; *bronzewing* (a pigeon found in large numbers in the bush) came to denote a member of the proletariat; *ringneck* (a bird) was used to describe a jackeroo, because new chums recently arrived from England retained their white collars for a time and bore a fancied resemblance to the ring-neck parakeet.

Blue tongue (from the lizard of that name) and *crocodile* are both used outback for rouseabouts; and *joey* (the young of a kangaroo) also denotes a handyman, although the more customary expression is *wood-and-water joey*.

Another example is *rosella* (a bird) which, in former times, served to describe a European working stripped to the waist, doubtless because he became badly sunburnt and an analogy could be perceived between him and the Crimson Rosella. Australian soldiers describe staff officers as *rosellas* because of the red tabs worn on their lapels.

⁹ "Hunt's Book of Bonanzas".

CHAPTER XIII

ABORIGINES AND PIDGIN ENGLISH

1.—NATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

ALTHOUGH Australian aboriginal language is a source from which we have drawn much of our idiom, there are few subjects upon which the public is more generally misinformed. This is not entirely the public's fault. In the first place, a malignant fate, in the shape of slovenly observers, has helped to perpetuate the allegation that our aborigines are the least intelligent humans in the world. This allegation has a good deal to do with the admitted fact that the aborigines are probably the most archaic or primitive people extant, an unfortunate and quite unwarranted contempt having arisen through a confusion between the time-concept and the intelligence-concept of the word "primitive".

In the second place, Australians have not as yet devoted enough honest research to aborigines and their ways of life to be in a position to pass judgment on them. Records of their languages are extremely deficient—for instance, no exhaustive grammar of an aboriginal language has been published.¹ There is no comprehensive—or even partially comprehensive—dictionary of reference to aboriginal dialects. Existing dictionaries, if they may be graced with such a title, are either hopelessly inadequate or inaccurate.² As a result, we have no means in our possession

¹ This point was stressed by S. H. Ray in an article on aboriginal languages in the "Australian Encyclopaedia". "The existing material for the study of the aboriginal languages is of a very unsatisfactory nature," he declared.

² The most extensive work of its kind is probably "The Australian Aboriginal Dictionary" by W. Bishop (1929) which is in MS. form in the

Mitchell Library, Sydney. This contains many thousands of terms, but is rather a catalogue than a dictionary. No effort is made to indicate the dialects or districts to which the words belong. An incomplete although interesting "Vocabulary of Aboriginal Words and Names" was published in 1916 by James J. Baylis, but contains some patent inaccuracies. Another work—again

of obtaining anything like a complete picture of the aboriginal even in the accessible subject of his language.

If the average Australian knows so little about native dialects, it is scarcely likely that he will be able to appreciate how extensive has been the impression they have left on his modern language. *Kookaburra, billabong, bomboora, corroberrry, gunyah, lubra, boomerang, nulla nulla*—he may have these fixed in his mind as aboriginal, but ask him about *billy, jumbuck, never never, yabber, waddie, willy willy, jackeroo, humpy, go bung, rosella, dillybag, within cooee* and he will probably be quite unable to pick accurately the words with authentic aboriginal origins and those which we have imported from overseas.

Ignorance of this type is no new thing. Perhaps it is one of the most persistent features of our association with the aborigines. From the earliest days of Australia, confusion has shrouded relationships between English and natives.

Much of the responsibility for that confusion must be laid at the door of the noxious form of speech known as pidgin English. In my "New Zealand Slang" I pointed out that the Maori language was almost certainly modified by its reduction to English writing—by the fact that it was forced into certain alphabetical moulds. Something even more drastic occurred to Australian aboriginal languages, which have been the playground for caprice³ and hasty observation for a century and a half.

In September 1796 D. Collins,⁴ commenting on the type of speech current between whites and natives, wrote: "Nothing but a barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect

incomplete and misleading—in MS. form is a "Vocabulary of New South Wales Aboriginal Dialects", compiled by members of the staff of the Mitchell Library, Sydney (1908). Apart from the fact that it deals only with N.S.W., that much of its material came from black-trackers who moved from district to district and that, as a consequence, the dialects are mixed, the work has the added deficiency that it was never completed. About 1200 examples were listed in "Australian Aboriginal Native Words", by Sydney J. Endacott (1924: republished

1944) and some 550 "euphonious words" from N.S.W. dialects were listed in the 1943 edition of "New South Wales Aboriginal Place Names" by Frederick D. McCarthy.

³ "Most of the earlier grammars adopted a system based upon Italian vowel-sounds and English consonantal-sounds; but in later works, and in a great majority of the vocabularies words are spelled in all sorts of ways, without any indication of the sounds attached to the letters."—S. H. Ray, "Australian Encyclopaedia".

⁴ "Account of New South Wales".

is spoken by either party." (He gives such examples as *caw-be* for coffee, and *Midger Plindah* for Mr Flinders.) This "barbarous mixture" was pidgin English. Not the original pidgin of China, but the original of what is now known throughout the Pacific as beach-la-mar. It flourished in Australia and New Zealand long before it became established in the small Pacific Islands which are its home today. It was the original lingua franca between Europeans and Australian aborigines and, because they were quicker to learn the white man's imbecilities than the white man was to learn native dialects, their own language became tainted with pidgin.

L. E. Threlkeld, author of "An Australian Grammar" (1834), declared:

It is necessary to notice certain barbarisms⁵ which have crept into use, introduced by sailors, stockmen and others who have paid no attention to the aboriginal tongue, in the use of which both blacks and whites labour under the mistaken idea that each one is conversing in the other's language. The following list contains the most common in use in these parts:

<i>boojery</i> , good.	<i>jerrund</i> , fear.
<i>bail</i> , no.	<i>kangaroo</i> , an animal.
<i>boge</i> , to bathe.	<i>carbon</i> , large.
<i>bimble</i> , earth.	<i>mije</i> , little.
<i>boomiring</i> , a weapon.	<i>mogo</i> , axe.
<i>budgel</i> , sickness.	<i>murry</i> , many.
<i>cudgel</i> , tobacco.	<i>pickaninney</i> , child.
<i>gammon</i> , falsehood.	<i>piyaller</i> , to speak.
<i>gibber</i> , a stone.	<i>tuggerrer</i> , cold.
<i>gummy</i> , a spear.	<i>wikky</i> , bread.
<i>goonyer</i> , a hut.	<i>waddy</i> , a cudgel.
<i>hillimung</i> , a shield.	<i>wommerrer</i> , a weapon.
<i>jin</i> , a wife.	<i>strike-a-light</i> , to make known.

Even a cursory examination serves to show that, while many of these "barbarisms" represented no more than importations from other dialects, some of them could not, by any stretch of imagination, be given a place in authentic aboriginal language. *Gammon*, *pickaninney*, *waddy* and *strike-a-light* are outstanding examples.

Although Threlkeld was incorrect in dismissing all the words listed above as non-aboriginal, the point he makes is important. The mixing of aboriginal dialects—that is, the migration of terms from one district to another—through the agency of the

⁵ Morris comments: "A barbarism means with Mr Threlkeld little more than 'not belonging to the Hunter district'."

European has probably been so great that it can now never be accurately assessed.

Here is what J. D. Lang wrote in "Cooksland" (1847):

Words quite as unintelligible to the natives as the corresponding words in vernacular language of the white man would have been, were learned by the natives, and are now commonly used by them in conversing with Europeans. Thus *corrobory*, the Sydney word for a general assembly of natives, is now commonly used in that sense at Moreton Bay; but the original word there is *yanerville*. *Cabon*, great, *narang*, little, *boodgerree*, good, *myall*, wild native, etc., are all words of this description, supposed by the natives to be English words, and by Europeans to be aboriginal words of the language of that district.

A similar point had been made a little earlier by C. Hodgkinson who, in his "Australia" (1845), spoke of

. . . the jargon which the stockmen and sawyers suppose to be the language of the natives, whilst they suppose it to be ours, and which is the ordinary medium of communication between the squatters and the tame black-fellows.

The European influence therefore had two clearcut effects: (a) the introduction of pidgin as a lingua franca between black and white, and (b) the spreading of aboriginal terms of limited original use in one district to other, and often remote, districts. These effects are so closely allied that they are more or less the manifestation of a single motif—the inevitable degeneration of all native languages with which the European comes in contact.

Two of the most competent reviews of aboriginal influence on Australian speech yet written were those of A. Meston, in 1896, and of Ernest Favenc, in 1904. Here are some of Favenc's comments:

The pidgin talk which is considered so essential for carrying on conversation with a blackfellow is mostly of very old origin. Of late years few words appear to have been added to its delirious jumble of the English and Australian languages; and most of it is derived from New South Wales and Victoria. Or it might be better said from New South Wales only, as, when most of it originated, Victoria was not. As the whites pushed on and on amongst new tribes, nothing was taken from the local dialects to add to the general pidgin stock, but the original was carried along, mostly by the black boys who accompanied the whites.

Take the beautiful word *myall*, for example, which the blacks have added to our language, and which is now used all over the continent to signify wild or untamed. This was the name of a Bogan tribe distinguished even amongst the aboriginals for ferocity and aloofness. Sturt first came into contact with them and noticed that they did not object to being called *myalls* whilst other tribes repudiated the name.

The Australian Language

Cooler, angry, comes from the Lower Darling, as does *murri*, very.

The Darling blacks, who fought Mitchell so determinedly, were said by the others to be *murri-cooler*.

Mickie, quick, another Riverina word, is often made a compound with *murri*, only the pronunciation is altered to *merry*; and *merry mickie*, very quick or look sharp, is the result.

Bong, dead, is very old Brisbane River dialect. *Yowi*, yes, *bal*, no, *yan*, go, *mundooie*, leg or foot, *carbon*, very much, *cobbra*, head, *bingee*, belly, etc., belong to New South Wales of the old, old days.

It is true that a few words have been adopted from other tribes, but as a rule they are used only locally, not generally, like the old pidgin which has become Australian now.

For instance, there is *Binghi*, a name applied to a mainland blackfellow at Thursday Island.

Taking it all and through, the Murray and Darling and their tributaries have been the birthplace of most of the pidgin in common use.

An even more thorough examination of aboriginal material was made by Meston, who concerned himself mainly with establishing the origins of certain native terms in our speech. Here are some of his more important observations:

The first blacks with whom the whites associated were those of Sydney and Botany Bay, followed by those of the Hawkesbury, Hunter and Twofold Bay. To the dialects of those places we naturally turn for the earliest aboriginal words in use among the white men.

The most interesting vocabulary in my possession is one taken down from the lips of Bennelong, one of the two Sydney blacks who went to England with Governor Phillip in 1792. Attached to this is another taken from a George's River black named Walwarra, in 1803, by Thomas Jarret Ives, who lived with the blacks and spoke their language.

Both vocabularies were printed at the "Sydney Gazette" office in 1809. In the Botany dialect I find the first record of the word *myall*, the name given to a stranger. The Botany dialect gave the word *kobbera* for head. At Sydney it was *cabboora*. It gave us *mundowie*, the word for leg, though widely used for the foot by the whites. From Botany came the words *wombat*, *wommer*, *yarraman*, *wonga-wonga*, *gunya*, *waddy*, *wollaba* (wallaby), *wallaroo*, *heelamin*, *budjerie*, *corobberie*, *baal* and *curriejung*.

Yarraman was *yeeramahn*, from *yeera*, the teeth, and *mahn*, long—literally "long teeth", a name for the horse.

The negative was *beeal* (baal) and the affirmative *yooeen*. From Botany came the once-familiar words, *paialla*, to tell, *durellie*, to fight, *coolahra*, angry, *jerran*, frightened and *goori*, fat.

From Botany comes the word *boomerang*. Walwarra called it "boomerang" and "bummering". The Botany tribe called the native bear *coolah*, the same as one of the bear-names at Moreton Bay.

All these words were scattered by the pioneer timber-getters, settlers or squatters from Sydney to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Many English words have been taken by the aboriginal (or perhaps it would be better to say they have been palmed off on the blacks by whites) and, after being modified in meaning by the natives, have come back to us with fresh applications. *Whitefellow* and *blackfellow* are examples of this aboriginal influence on our speech, *fellow*—and its versions *fella*, *feller* or *pfella*—being a persistent intrusive in all beach-la-mar. Thus the aboriginal uses *cheekyfellow* to describe something that is dangerous or injurious, *bigfellow* for something especially large, *whitefellow devil*, for electricity.

Mob is another example. Through aboriginal use of the word we now employ it to describe any number or quantity. Thus we can have *mobs of water*, *mobs of money*, *mobs of time*, *mobs of jackasses* (of cattle, kangaroos, persons, etc.). We have even developed a slang use, *to mob in with someone*, to live with a person.

Yabber, to talk, is closely allied to the English word *jabber*. *Big smoke* was used by the aborigines to denote a town long before it was colloquial. *Waddie* is a corruption of the word "wood" and is now applied to any stick or rough club. We have also made a verb out of it: *to waddy* means to beat with a waddy or stick.

Then there are the aboriginal words which we have borrowed and extended in meaning, e.g. *bogie* or *bogey*, to bathe, from which we have taken *bogiehole*, a swimming hole, *bogiehouse*, a bathroom, and *bogieing*, bathing; *cooe*, the call, from which we have developed the verb *to cooe* and the figurative use, *within cooe*, meaning close at hand; *dilly*, fine wood dust, which we have extended to *dillybag*, originally the small bag in which natives carried sticks and tinder for making fires, later any handy bag; *boomerang*, the weapon, from which has come the verb *to boomerang*⁶ and the verbal noun *boomeranging*; *corroboree*, a dance, by which we now describe any noise or tumult made by a collection of people⁷; *jackeroo* (or *tchaceroo*), said to denote a garrulous bird, which may have given us the use of this word to describe a station worker; *jumbuck*, a white mist, applied by the aborigines to a sheep; *billy*, a tin can for boiling water or cooking, from the aboriginal *billa*, water; and

⁶ Whence, the cant phrase *it's a boomerang!* when one wishes the return of something that has been borrowed.

⁷ In old bush slang water which had come to the boil was said to *corroboree*.

never never, the remote inland, possibly from the aboriginal *Nievah vabs*.⁸

There are other words like *binjey*, stomach, *humpy*, a hut, *yacker* or *yakka*, work, *gibber*, a stone, *boko*, blind,⁹ all more or less retaining their original native pronunciation, that have acquired especial importance for us.

More strict in application are those aboriginal words we have incorporated in our language without marked alteration or extension of their meaning. For example: *gin*, *lubra*, *kiley*, *coolamon*, *bora*, *woomera* or *wommerera*, *mia-mia*, *gunyah*, *goondie*, *wurley*, *leangle*, *mulga*, *hielaman*, *nulla nulla*.

Generally speaking these are known and recognized throughout Australia. There are, however, important uses which are peculiar to certain states or to certain areas, either because they come into use in the relations between white and black, or because they describe something peculiar to certain districts. In the latter category falls *bomboora* to describe a dangerous reef of rocks usually found at the foot of cliffs. This is naturally confined to coastal regions. *Pindan* is the blacks' name for the desert country inland from Broome, W.A., so the whites call the Kimberley natives *pindan blacks*. To *live on the pindan* is to wander aimlessly in the Westralian outback. *Yacki* (pronounced yack-eye) is an aboriginal word of the outback used to describe a big row or celebration. Thus, in the Centre it is current among bushmen; *yacki-ing*, for instance, describes calling out.

Wamba and *combo* are never heard in the south-eastern states. They describe a white man who lives with a native woman. To *go combo* and *comboing* are heard frequently in all northern parts of Australia from Queensland to Western Australia. So is *munjong*, a new chum, and *pink-hi*, holiday, e.g. on *pink-hi* in the south.

Myall, describing anything wild or untamable, is known throughout the country, but its application to an amateur or new chum is an ironic northern use. From the same area comes *myall express*, a trip made with aborigines as guides or attendants.

Yindi, the sun, *mendic*, sick, *patter*, to eat, *yarraman*, a horse—these are also expressions of limited currency among whites.

⁸ A somewhat doubtful suggestion made by F. de B. Cooper, "Wild Adventures in Australia" (1857).

⁹ Especially used of a wall-eyed horse.

2.—BLACKS AND BINGHIS

Before we examine the words that whites have given to the natives—the true pidgin English, in short—it is necessary to pause briefly to examine the group of Australianisms that has developed round the existence of aborigines in this country. Among these we can list *firestick*, *letter stick*, *message stick* or *pass-it-on*, *throwing stick*, *roarer* or *bull-roarer*, *dispersal* (a euphemism for early massacres of the blacks),¹⁰ and a number of expressions, *to bone*, *point a bone*, *sing a bone* or *spit a bone*, all of which describe a form of native magic by which an enemy is “willed” to death.

Numerous names have been developed to describe the natives, varying from the imported *nigger*, *buck nigger*, *boy*, *darkey* and *coloured people*, to the more authentic *abo*, *black*, *blackfellow*, *blackboy* and *myall*, and the popular *blacky*, *bing*, *binghi*, *boong*, *boang*, *black brother*, *murky*, *dark cloud*, *swatser*, *black skin*, *kipper* and *whistlecock*. An aboriginal woman is known to the slanguist as a *bitumen blonde* or *black velvet*. A half-caste girl is a *halfie*, a quarter-caste is a *creamie* or *chocolate creamie*. A half-caste boy is a *piebald pony*.

Binghi (pronounced bing-eye) is an aboriginal word meaning brother which has been popularized, mainly by “Bulletin” writers, to apply to aborigines in general. In New Guinea pidgin *beangi* is used to describe a native from the Bouang area, Morobe District, as is *bouang* itself. *Kipper* is an old expression for a “hobbledehoy black” and *whistlecock* describes an aboriginal male who has undergone a crude operation to his penis which prevents impregnation.

Blacktracker, a native used by police to track down criminals or persons lost in rough outback country, is another old word. The “Australian Encyclopaedia” says that “the earliest known official reference to the use of aborigines for this purpose occurs in a memorial of the legislative council to Governor Brisbane”, dated 6 September 1825. In 1919 there were 210 blacktrackers in Australian police service; in 1938 their number had dwindled to 128.

The U.S. slang use of *unbleached American* for a negro al-

¹⁰ Two related terms are *black war*, a drive planned in September 1830 to capture two Tasmanian tribes who had retaliated against white brutal-

ities, and *black line*, the drive as formed by more than 3000 colonists to hem in the natives in this “war”.

most certainly influenced the expression *unbleached Australians*, for aborigines, noted in 1895 by Crowe.

White blackfellow, a European living with the natives; *to go black*, to adopt native ways of life; *to live white*, (of aborigines) to live or attempt to live as whites; *mission shy*, used of natives who avoid contact with mission stations; *to sit up like Jackey*, to sit up straight as an aboriginal is supposed to do in company with whites; *blackfellow's game*, a contemptuous term for euchre; and *blackfellow's gift*, a gift made in expectation of something in return—these are a few more of our lingual inventions that take the Australian native as their subject.

The Australian link with New Guinea is shown by the fact that several of our terms for natives have been transferred across Torres Strait. Here is a note on the subject from "Smith's Weekly" of 25 July 1942:

My missionary friend insists on *native boys* [to describe Papuans]; to the plantation man they are coons. . . . Visiting tourist ladies, who knew no better, called them *blacks* or *black boys*, and I have heard the odd Yank call them *smokes*. At Thursday Island the pearlers are always *Paps*, and old Northern Territorians call them *boongs*, even *binghis* and *abos*. . . . New arrivals, airing their Motuan, called them *meros*.

3.—PIDGIN IN AUSTRALIA

In "The Emigrant Family" (1849), A. Harris remarks:

The language of the aborigines varies most remarkably in different parts. But there is a sort of slang in which communication is held between them and the white people, common to all parts of the colony.

Mundy adds a little illumination in "Our Antipodes" (1852) when he writes:

A kind of bush patois, chiefly composed of very broken English mixed with words quite foreign to either British or native tongues, has long been the established mode of oral communication with the aborigines.

And here is a modern opinion on the same subject, taken from "Stone-age Bushmen of Today" (1936), by J. R. B. Love:

The Australian native has himself a wonderful gift for language and quickly learns English.¹¹ This gift of the native for acquiring English makes all

¹¹ The ease with which aborigines picked up English was commented on by P. Cunningham, "Two Years in N.S.W." (1826): "All the natives round Sydney understand English well and speak it, too, so as to be

understood by residents. The Billingsgate slang they certainly have acquired in perfection, and no white would think of competing with them in abuse or hard swearing."

the more deplorable the common use of pidgin English between whites and blacks. The black speaks pidgin English because he is taught to speak that travesty of a language, not because he cannot learn proper English. Where the black is taught proper English, he speaks it.¹²

The majority of Australians are probably not inclined to consider pidgin of significance in the evolution of our speech, but the simple fact remains that this lingual bastardization, which was introduced in its original form by our first convicts and their keepers, is current throughout the northern portions of Australia, from Western Australia to Queensland,¹³ and in all places where whites come in contact with native workers. Not only is it deep-rooted in terms of history, but it was confirmed by the importation of Pacific Islanders during the 1870s and 1880s to work Queensland plantations, by the admission of Torres Strait islanders to the mainland, and by the strong Australian link with New Guinea over which we received a mandate in 1921.

The white Australian's indifference towards aboriginal problems has been due, in part at least, to the unfortunate and quite unwarranted contempt held by Europeans for the aboriginal mind. This contempt has been fostered by lack of information about the natives, by lack of research, and perhaps, above all, by lack of desire to understand.

Few writers on Australia during the nineteenth century considered they had done their job properly unless they tossed in a few garbled scraps of English to show that they were *au fait* with aboriginal modes of speech, such as "You pilmillally jum-buck, plenty sulky me, plenty boom, borack gammon"¹⁴ or sundry examples in which *make a light*, *jump up whitefellow* and *dead finish* featured as proof that the author had fathomed the darkest recesses of the aboriginal mind. Beyond this superficial evidence they rarely went.

Only in the past few decades has any determined effort been made to interpret the aboriginal to the world as a human being, with human problems of his own, as important in their way

¹² In his "Coast of Adventure" (1941), Charles Barrett comments on an aboriginal's speech: "Notice that Jimmy didn't say 'Mine tinkit' in approved magazine blackfellow style. 'I think' were the words he used."

¹³ On 7 November 1891, the Melbourne "Argus" referred scornfully

to "that ridiculous pigeon English which the whites have used . . . throughout Queensland . . . as their medium of communication with the blacks".

¹⁴ C. Griffith, "Present State and Prospects of the Port Phillip District of N.S.W." (1845).

as the negro problems of the United States. Practically the first book to make such an interpretive effort was "Coonardoo: the Well in the Shadow", by K. S. Prichard (1929). Herein we find the Australian native treated as an individual, not as some weird manifestation of sub-life—an individual with feelings, emotions and loyalties closely akin to our own.

Xavier Herbert gave us an excellent glimpse of aboriginal life, especially as it concerns half-castes, in his "Capricornia" (1938). Eleanor Dark's novel, "The Timeless Land" (1941) is perhaps the best fictional study yet written about our natives.

More recent still—and the first time the aboriginal has been a key-subject of drama—is the play, "Fountains Beyond", by the Brisbane author G. L. Dann, broadcast by the A.B.C. on 11 September 1942. This play is unique, not only because it breaks new ground in Australian literature and because it touches the dark core of conflict between white and black ways of life, but because it interprets the aboriginal in his own idiom. It is one of the few plays ever written that relies for much of its veracity and forcefulness on being presented partly in pidgin English. As Leslie Rees wrote in the "ABC Weekly" of 5 September 1942:

How easy it is to act as though folk who do not use our own idiom or are verbally inarticulate or of a different skin-colour are incapable of kindness, understanding, or of the need of these.

If we are able to find some common medium for understanding and interpreting the native mind, we have gone a long way towards lifting the obscurities that have clouded the subject in the past. Pidgin English is, therefore, not to be lightly discarded. If pidgin will help us understand the aboriginal, then let our authors not fear to use it. It is another matter altogether, of course, whether some determined attempt should not be made to educate the aborigines to speak purer English—say, through the medium of Basic English.¹⁵

¹⁵ In 1936 the Federal Senate passed a resolution, on the motion of Senator McCartney Abbott (N.S.W.), asking the King to call an international convention to establish a universal language. This petition was refused by the King, but if Australia's legislators were enthusiastic enough to wish English to be spoken throughout the world, there is surely no reason why they should not tackle on their own account the

problem of encouraging the use of English in the Commonwealth.

R. C. Trench, "On the Study of Words" (1851), adds this footnote to the perpetuation of pidgin among natives: "There is no such witness to the degradation of the savage as the brutal poverty of his language, so there is nothing that so effectively tends to keep him in the depths to which he has fallen."

And here is how Herbert sums

Pidgin in New Zealand shows a marked divergence from pidgin used in Australia. This is due largely to the earnest efforts made by the New Zealand Government to educate Maoris in the use of English. Many of the natives speak English infinitely better than their white compatriots. But on this side of the Tasman the Government rarely if ever spares a thought for improving aboriginal education.

If, in order to retain a white concept when speaking his native language, the Maori corrupts missionary to *mihinare*, pipe to *paipa*, regulation to *rekureihana*, or even such a word as torpedoed to *topitongia*, we should not be surprised if we find the Australian aborigine doing exactly the same thing. Here are some examples from Kimberley tribes, collected by Ernest Worms:¹⁶

mele mele or *mele mel*. A letter or book, from the English word "mail".

bulemano or *buleman*. A bull, ox, cow or calf, from the word "bull".¹⁷

dyilaman or *dyileman*. A gun, from "kill a man".

dyarge. Turkey.

dyorab. A strap.

dima. Steamer.¹⁸

madyer or *madyeri*. Matches.¹⁹

dyad. Shirt.²⁰

dyawody or *dyawodyo*. Trousers.²¹

dauody. Pouch.

baib or *baibo*. Pipe.²²

Bred. Fred.

Naib. Knife.

waidbel, *wadbel*, *walybalo*, *walybela*. Whitefellow.

bamba. By and by.

bagede. Bucket.

bolanggar, *balanggad*, *bolangged*. Blanket.²³

bod, *bodo*. Boot(s).²⁴

There is an infinite variety of this material in Australia, thriv-

up the position in Australia: "The language of compounds and aboriginal reserves is pidgin. A few score of words. No wonder such people think like animals!"

¹⁶ "Studies in Australian Linguistics", Oceanic Monographs, No. 3.

¹⁷ The Maori corruption is *puru*.

¹⁸ Maori, *tima*.

¹⁹ Maori, *mai*.

²⁰ Maori, *hate*.

²¹ Maori, *tarautete*.

²² Maori, *paipa*.

²³ Maori, *paraikete*.

²⁴ Maori, *putu*.

ing wherever the black comes into contact with the white, yet mainly of insufficient weight to have made any broad impression upon the Australian language as we are concerned with it in this book. But that impression may come in time, since pidgin is current across the entire northern section of Australia, especially in the Northern Territory, and is acquiring certain colloquial uses.

Probably the best review of Australian pidgin²⁵ yet compiled is the work of an American, Edgar Sheppard Sayer whose "Pidgin English" was published in 1939. Sayer lived for some years in tropical Australia and became intimately acquainted with the pidgin language of this country. His dictionary of Australian pidgin words is the most outstanding of its kind.

Here are some of the words he lists: *sheepysheep*, *takum*, *talkum*, *fixem*, *catchum*, *gibbit*, *ticky-ticky water* (oil), *Big Name* (God), *paper-talk* or *paper-yabber* (a letter), *eatum wind cart* (a car: an expression derived almost certainly from the Malayan pidgin *wind wagon*, a car), *big fella hawk*, *big fella cockatoo* or *firebird longa sky* (an aeroplane), *kid* (£1, *ex* the slang "quid"), *halfem kid* (10s.) and *taybit* (3d., *ex* the slang "traybit").

Sayer gives a number of Australian pidgin translations, among which is Psalm 23. Here is a portion of it:

Big Name watchem sheepysheep:
watchem blackfella. No more belly
cry fella hab.

Big Name makum camp alonga
grass, takum blackfella walkabout
longa, no fightem no more hurry
watta.

Big Boss longa sky makum inside
glad; takem walkabout longa too
much good fella. . . .

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall
not want. He maketh me to lie down
in green pastures: he leadeth me be-
side the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth
me in the paths of righteousness for
his name's sake. . . .

Sayer notes that "the aborigines use the slang in use in Australia when they are much in contact with whitemen", and he gives some examples: *tinned dog*, for canned meats—*me no likkit tinyd dogy*; *swig*, for drink—*gibbit swig beer boss?*; chasing the skirts—*chasem lubra*.

Some of the material given above might seem trivial and outside the scope of this book were it not for the fact that numerous Australian pidgin words are finding their way into white Australian speech.

²⁵ It should be remembered that this pidgin is distinct from the pidgin English of New Guinea natives.

Wha'nim, for instance, is a clipped form of *what name?*²⁶ which serves as a general utility question mark, meaning why? how? what do you mean? what's it all about? and so on. White residents of the north frequently employ it in jocular speech between themselves, just as they say *no more*, meaning "no", and *youi*, meaning "yes". In the same way they use the expressions *walk-about*, *piccaninny daylight*, *finger-talk*, *footwalk*, *sugarbag*, *honeybag*, *mary* and *lolly water* (soft drink). *Walkabout*, especially in the verbal form *to go walkabout*, is known throughout Australia.²⁷ So are *honeybag* for honey and *mary* as a generic name for woman. For generations they have been slowly working their way into our popular speech.

Mary is an almost inevitable nickname for an aboriginal female, in the same way that a native male is often labelled *Billy* or *Jacky Jacky*. In pidgin English it is indispensable.²⁸ J. L. Nicholas recorded it in New Zealand pidgin use in 1815. Mrs R. C. Praed, in "Australian Life" (1885), even ventured to refer to white women as *white mairies*.

Equally useful in Australian pidgin is *piccaninny*, a child. It is a West Indian negro term (from Spanish *pequeño*) imported to Australasia by early adventurers. Morris declares: "After a while English people thought the word was aboriginal Australian, while the aborigines thought it was correct English." It is now in continual use. In his New Guinea "Pidgin English Dictionary" (1937), "Maski Mike" renders the word *piccani*, "child white or black", and provides the added examples *piccani belong dewai*, nuts or tree fruits, *piccani belong pul pul*, seeds of flowers, *piccani belong bean*, vegetable seeds. The Catholic missions at Vunapope and Alexishafen both use the form *pikinini*, as in *Long Pikinini Yesus i slip long krib*.

4.—NORFOLK DIALECT

Australian kinship with Pacific Islands pidgin is not by any means as remote as many Australians would have it. Here is an opinion on the matter by William Churchill in his "Beach-la-Mar"²⁹ (1911):

²⁶ This is current in New Guinea pidgin. Interchangeable in Australia is *what way?* This appears in Norfolk Island pidgin (or dialect) in the greeting *what away you?* how are you?

²⁷ Hence, by analogy, a report in the Sydney "Sun" of 4 November 1942, that a missing lovebird had

gone flyabout, and in the same paper of 23 November 1943, a note that a wallaby mascot had *gone hopabout*.

²⁸ Thus, *house mary*, a female servant, *school mary*, school girl, *widow mary*, a widow, *piccaninny mary*, a baby girl.

²⁹ "L'expression 'bichelamar' est consacrée par un usage déjà ancien

Of certain elements of low, cant, vulgar English [in Pacific pidgin] the sailors may have been the carriers. But another source is to be included. It was not all of blackbirding³⁰ to get the kanaka aboard the schooner of the labour trade; his term of hard labour was to be served in the Queensland plantations. Here he had the opportunity to enrich his vocabulary with words which characterise Austral English. It is to this opportunity, which one might scarcely venture upon saying the moiling exile enjoyed, that we must ascribe in the greater measure the inclusion of such terms as *tumble down* and *blackfellow*, of *flash* and *trash*, of *hook it* and *clear out*, of *hump* and *wire in*, of *gammon* and *bloody*.

This was one way in which Australia influenced the evolution of beach-la-mar. But there were others, notably her 150 years of trading in and around neighbouring islands—Norfolk Island, where a penal settlement was established in 1788; New Caledonia, where French colonists had to fight hard to wean the natives from their habit of using pidgin English; New Guinea, where German colonists and missionaries found it impossible to inveigle the natives into using German instead of pidgin English. The Germans made persistent efforts to displace pidgin English by German, but the main relics of their struggle are *ananas*, a pineapple, *bund*, often rendered *bung*, a market, meeting or gathering, *mark*, which the natives still use to describe a silver coin, especially a shilling, *puss-puss*, love or fornication (from the German dialectal *Pussi*, a kiss), and *rauss*, to shift, remove, go away—from *heraus*. Such pretences as spelling *braun* for brown, *doktor* for doctor, *nord* for north, *tausend* for thousand, and *handert* (it should be *hundert*) for hundred—as used in books printed by the Alexishafen Catholic Mission—are little more than self-deception.³¹

et si répandu dans les archipels français de la Mélanésie, que nous le conservons," notes M. Leenhardt in his "Vocabulaire et Grammaire de la Langue Houaïlou" (1935).

³⁰ The terms *blackbird* (both as noun and verb), *blackbirder*, *blackbirding*, *blackbird catching* and *blackbird hunting* are all believed to have been originally Australian. T. Dunbabin, "Slavers of the South Seas," notes: "Between 1863-1904 60,000 kanakas were brought to Australia. . . . Natives of Tanna in the New Hebrides formed so large a part of the imports . . . that *Tommy Tanna* became the general nickname of these island labourers."

³¹ Quoth Baron von Hesse-Wartegg on behalf of Germany, long before World War No. 1: ". . . es jetzt noch Zeit ist, das Pidgen-Englisch auszurotten; vergeht aber noch ein Jahrzehnt, dann wird es sich bei der täglich wachsenden Bevölkerung so eingebürgert haben, dass es unmöglich sein dürfte, und in weiteren fünfzig Jahren besitzt das Deutsche Reich hier ein Schutzgebiet, dessen Missionbevölkerung nur Englisch spricht. Für die Weltstellung und das Ansehen Deutschlands wäre dies gewiss traurig und beschämend." So it has proved.

Highly valuable research on the development of the Norfolk Island dialect (it is really a form of pidgin or beach-la-mar) was done some years ago by A. R. L. Wiltshire, of Melbourne. This dialect originated when the "Bounty" mutineers took a number of native girls from Tahiti to Pitcairn—a lingua franca of native and English speech which gradually developed to a well-defined dialectal form. Dr H. L. Shapiro, Associate Curator of the American Museum of Natural History, says:

Pitcairn dialect today consists of mispronounced English and Tahitian words, with a spattering of coined words, the whole employed in a degenerate English syntax.

Pitcairnese is well established on Norfolk Island where, in 1936, there were about 600 descendants of the original "Bounty" mutineers and their native wives. Also on Norfolk Island are some 600 Mainlanders, settlers and visitors from Australia and New Zealand.

Wiltshire declares:³²

The Norfolk *Islanders* all speak good ordinary English in an easy deliberate tone, but among themselves use a jargon they call *Norfolk*, which to an outsider is unintelligible. Some of the words have a Tahitian origin and some others are distorted English. As far as I know, no one has compiled a full vocabulary of this dialect.

The reason for the transfer of the Pitcairn dialect was that in 1856 all the inhabitants of the former island were shifted to Norfolk Island. Some, becoming homesick, returned to Pitcairn in 1858 or soon after, since when the two communities have been almost entirely independent.

Authorities state that the dialects of these two communities remain practically identical, but there are certain differences that are bound to increase in course of time, especially on Norfolk Island which is in closer contact with the mainland than Pitcairn. It would be of enduring philological interest if the Australian Government would finance a detailed examination of this unique dialectal form of pidgin. Mr Wiltshire's research is an excellent piece of work, but an even closer investigation is called for.

³² In a paper on "The Local Dialects of Norfolk and Pitcairn Islands", published in the "Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society", vol. xxv, part iv, p. 331.

Here are a few examples of Norfolk speech that reveal kinship with pidgin English as we generally know it:

boney-boney. Thin.

buss up. Broken up.

car fetch. Can't be done.

dar da weay. That's the way.

gimie. Give me.

lebbby. Let it be.

mekase. Hurry, make haste.

shēp. Ship.

ways? Where is (it)?

As at least half the population of Norfolk Island is represented by settlers and visitors mainly from Australia and New Zealand, many common Australianisms are used or understood on the island. A point to be noted is that these Australianisms as yet appear to have made little impression on the Norfolk dialect.

5.—NEW GUINEA

In New Guinea the position is somewhat different. As William Churchill pointed out, numerous terms current in Australian speech—although not necessarily originally Australian—made their way from this country into beach-la-mar. *To sool*, *plant*, *spell*, *go bush*, *bush kanaka*, *bugger up*, *capstan* (as a generic name for tobacco), *cranky*, *goddam*, *backside*, *walkabout*, *dead finish*—these are some of the many words in Pacific pidgin that owe their currency largely to Australian influence. A sound reason for this is given by Churchill:

The sailors who made up the crews of these legalised slavers [blackbirders] were recruited from the slums of the seaports of Australia, particularly the havens of Queensland from Moreton Bay to Cooktown. [The jargon spoken by these men] is not a difficult tongue to acquire [by the kanaka]; three years in the barracks of a plantation were the equivalent of a university course.

We can assess a little of the vulgar English taint in pidgin—and know that it will err where possible on the side of conservatism—when we examine such a publication as the “Word Buk” issued by the Roman Catholic Mission at Alexishafen, New Guinea. Here are some of the expressions used in the mission vocabulary: *bagarap*, to be useless, out of order, broken, from *bugger up*—e.g. *leg belong me i bagarap*: I've hurt my leg; *baksaid*, the rear of, back, behind; *bastard*; *bel*, stomach, used to denote pregnancy—e.g. *Meri i got /bel*; *kam*, the female pudend; *pispis*, the act of urination. These expressions may appear objectionable to the squeamish, but pidgin has done

something to them which it is almost impossible for the English to do: it has fumigated them and rid them of the taint of prurient, furtive minds.

Far more objectionable to the student of language are distorted expressions like *enaderfelo*, another one; *dertifelo*, dirty; *hariap*, hurry up; *tekimaut*, take away, out; *pulimaut*, pull out; *aderkaind*, other sort.

Mission attempts to reduce pidgin to writing are probably the worst features of this bastard speech, for they represent efforts to force into a mould a "language" that is essentially oral. Moreover, they are serving to perpetuate error instead of curing it. How much better it would be, if natives are to be taught in schools, for them to learn Basic English. That missions should embark on the objectionable programme of preparing primers in pidgin for young natives is bad enough, but that they should have sought no standardization in written pidgin is even worse.

Here are some cases in point—first, the Lord's Prayer as rendered by the Alexishafen Catholic Mission,³³ the Vunapope Catholic Mission,³⁴ and the Rabaul Methodist Mission:³⁵

Alexishafen. Fader bilong mifelo, yu stop long heven—Ol i santuim nem bilong yu—Kingdom bilong yu i kam—Ol i hirim tok bilong yu long graund olsem long heven. Tude givim mifelo kaikai bilong de—Forgivim rong bilong mifelo—olsem mifelo forgivim rong—ol i mekim long mifelo. Yu no bringim mifelo long traiim—tekewe samting no gud long mifelo. Amen.

Vunapope. Papa bolong mipela i stap antap—naim bolong ju i tambu-lotu bolong ju i kam—mipela daun olosem ol antap i harim tok bolong ju—ju bringim kaikai tede bolong mipela—ju larim mipela i olosem mipela i larim ol, ol i mekim nogut mipela—ju no bringim mipela klostu long rot i nogut—ju lusim ol samting nogut i raus long mipela. Amen.

Rabaul. Papa bilog mi fela, iu stop an top alog peles bilog iu, i qud mi fela sigsig out tru alog nem bilog iu; i moa beta ol a fasin bilog iu i stop alog oltuqeta peles. I qud mi fela mekim tru ol a lo bilog iu, ol a sem oltuqeta man i savi mekim alog peles bilog iu. I qud iu givim mi fela kaikai inafim mi fela alog tude. I qud iu no mekim koros alog mi fela alog ol a fasin no qud mi fela mekim, ol a sem mi fela no qat koros alog ol a man i savi korosim mi fela. Iu no bringim mi fela alog ol a samtig no qud; i moa beta iu luk outim mi fela so mi fela no ken mekim ol a fasin no qud. Bikos ol a lo, na oltuqeta strog, na oltuqeta samtig i qud i bilog iu, na i no ken finis. Amen.

33 "Buk bilong beten end singsing bilong ol katolik" (1937).

34 "Buk-Raring na singsing" (1934).

35 "A Pidgin Him Buk" (1941).

The Ten Commandments in three conflicting versions:

Alexishafen

1. Mi Master, God bilong yu, yu no ken mekim masalai end ol tambaran.
2. Yu no ken kolim nating nem bilong God.
3. Yu mast santuim sande.
4. Yu mast mekim gud long papamama bilong yu.
5. Yu no ken kilim man.
6. You no ken brukim fashin bilong marit.
7. Yu no ken stilim samting.
8. Yu no ken lai.
9. Yu no ken duim meri bilong enaderfelo man.
10. Yu no ken laik stilim samting.

Vunapope

1. Ju lotu long Deo vampela tasol.
2. Ju no kolim nating naim bolong Deo Masta bolong ju.
3. Long sande ju lotu na ju tambu long vok.
4. Ju hamamas long papa na mama bolong ju.
5. Ju no mekim dai vanpela man.
6. Ju no pilai nogut.
7. Ju no sitil.
8. Ju no gijaman.
9. Ju no laikim meri bolong narapela man.
10. Ju no laikim ologeta samting bolong narapela man.

Rabaul

1. Mi leova Qod bilog iu, iu no hirm nada fela Qod, bikos mi dasol i Qod.
2. (An unintelligible jumble of 87 words).
3. Iu no kolim natig nem bilog leova Qod bilog iu, bikos leova i no laikim wan fela sapos i kolim natig nem bilog im.
4. (117 words).
5. Iu marimari alog papa bilog iu na mam a bilog iu, ol sem iu kan kesim log fela laif alog peles leova Qod bilog iu i givim iu.
6. Iu no kan kilim wan fela.
7. Iu no kan mekim trobel alog meri.
8. Iu no kan stil.
9. Iu no kan qaman alog wan fela.
10. (44 words).

It will be obvious from the above quotations that the Rabaul mission's efforts are notable mainly for their prolixity and ridiculous phonetic system.

A correcting influence has been exerted by the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea. Although Administration officers use pidgin verbally in their dealings with natives, pure English is taught in native schools conducted by the Administration and the medium used is the native dialect of the locality in which the school is situated. No official publications have been issued on the subject of pidgin English.

The stupidity of allowing missions to perpetuate pidgin, while the Administration is attempting to purify the teaching of English, is too abysmal to require stress.

As in World War No. 1, when Australian troops occupied Papua, our soldiers have been given numerous opportunities of acquiring pidgin in the present war. Downing included in "Digger Dialects" (1919) a special section of pidgin as used by our soldiers. Since it has been largely repeated and extended in World War No. 2 it is worthy of repetition:

big boss. Commanding officer.

belly belong me he think. I am of the opinion that . . .

calaboose. Jail.

calaboose belong money. Purse.

grass. Hair.

house cook. Kitchen.

house paper. Office.

house sick. Hospital.

he's turned his belly. He's changed his mind.

lamp belong Jesus. The moon.

mary. Woman.

mary nothing. A term of opprobrium.

missionary belong soldier. Army chaplain.

machine he like die. The engine shows signs of stopping.

pull. Kidnap; falsely imprison.

small doctor. Medical orderly.

A fair cross-section of the type of material picked up in World War No. 2 is continued in the following (abbreviated) article by Marjorie Debert in the Sydney "Sun" of 22 September 1942:

If a Digger returns from the war and asks his wife: "Didiman belong me, 'e allsame whatname goodfella? Now all something 'e straight", there will be no need for alarm.

The man in uniform is only asking, "How is my garden coming along?" as he learnt to say it when he fought in New Guinea areas. . . .

The man of the house might want to know, "Is this paw paw ripe"—but he might say it like this: "Paw paw 'e mau?"

He might be making polite conversation at the luncheon table when he asks, "How many sheets did you wash today?"—or, as he may put it, "Markim ow much lap lap belong bed long sun, you you washim?"

. . . The men . . . are getting quite an amount of fun out of talking to each other in *Nugin*, as they call it.

"Lightim lamp", "workim bed", "brushim shoe", are stock phrases in a hundred camps north of the tropic. . . .

Any man who has asked for some hot water to shave "somewhere in New Guinea", will never forget the manner of its asking, "Me like cuttim grass, likeim water 'e 'ot."

Any woman who gets a letter from "somewhere up there" little guesses that the envelope it came in might have been sought thus, "Bringim skin belong pass."

. . . They ask for lemon drinks, sweetened—"Workim moulie, one time sukar."

If their wives send them some soap they're just as likely to tell their mates they've got some "sope s'mell".

But if a man comes back from New Guinea and says, "Leg belong me 'e tight", don't make any mistake. He means he's tired.

Early in 1943 a handbook of words and phrases in pidgin was issued by the Army to men on active service in South-west Pacific Islands. Here are two examples from the handbook which show how pidgin has gone to war (the spelling is that given in the handbook):

You-fella you stand fast. You no can walkabout. Suppose you-fella you walkabout me killim you long musket.—Don't move or I'll shoot.

You-fella you lookim barid all Japan i sit down long im long fight?—Is there barbed wire in front of the Jap trenches?

Here is a leaflet written in pidgin and dropped by Allied planes to friendly natives in New Guinea:

OL LULUAI, TULTUL NA MAN BILOG GUVMAN

Yumi sitron nau

Ol dei ol dei balus bilog yumi raunim olgeda Nugini bilog bom im sip, sutim lanis bakarap im somtig bilog Japan.

Yu mas lukaut im masta bilog balus sipos ol i kam daon long bus na nabis bilog yu.

Hait im gut, gifim gut pela kaikai, gut pela haus wok im bet, sipos lek bilog ol i nogut.

Birig im long Kiap, sipos onpela i stap klostu. Olgeda i got Pas bilog Guvman. Yumas halip im ol.

GUVMAN I TOK

Here is a translation:

TO ALL VILLAGE HEADMEN AND GOVERNMENT BOYS

We are strong now

Every day our (Allied) planes fly all around New Guinea, bombing ships, shooting up launches and damaging other things belonging to the Japanese.

You must keep a lookout for any (Allied) airman if he comes down in the bush or on beaches near where you live.

Hide him well, give him good food, and make him a comfortable bed if he cannot walk.

Take him to the District Officer if there is one near. All our airmen have Government passes. You must help them.

GOVERNMENT ORDER

A comparison between this example of printed pidgin and the efforts of the missions, given earlier, shows that here is yet another pidgin "dialect"—another of those semi-phonetic monstrosities which must make New Guinea natives shake their heads

in despair at the idiocies and inconsistencies of white men.

Probably the best dictionary of New Guinea pidgin yet published was produced during the war—"The Book of Pidgin English", by John J. Murphy (1943). It contains comprehensive notes on pidgin grammar and two-way word lists, from pidgin into English and from English into pidgin. Another pidgin dictionary, compiled by E. C. N. Helton, was also published in Australia in 1943.

6.—NEW CALEDONIA

Australian influence on New Caledonian speech has been surprisingly wide. This French colony, 700 miles east of Queensland, provides an excellent example of how Australianisms have gone out into the world on their own account. Although France took formal possession of the island in 1853 and has been exploiting its mineral wealth ever since, Australians as a whole know little about this near-neighbour.

Australian lingual influence on the island is perceivable for about a century, originally in the introduction of pidgin English or beach-la-mar and later in the incorporation of numerous Australianisms into French contexts. One fact the early French colonists of the island found hard to stomach was that the natives showed a deep-rooted objection to talking or learning French.³⁶

Here is a comment by Jules Patouillet, from his "Trois ans en Nouvelle-Calédonie" (Paris, 1872), which speaks for itself:

Aussi la plupart des colons préfèrent ils, dans leurs rapports personnels avec les noirs, employer un jargon compris dans presque toute l'étendue de la côte; c'est une imitation du sabir africain, mélange d'anglais, de français et de canaque, qui s'appelle le biche-la-mare.

Charles Lemire, author of "La Colonisation française de Nouvelle-Calédonie" (1878), puts the facts fairly clearly:

Les Anglais ont été les premiers qui aient fait le commerce avec les indigènes sur la côte de la Calédonie et aux Loyalty, et sont restés colons ou négociants dans le pays. Les Canaques engagés comme travailleurs viennent de l'archipel des Nouvelles-Hébrides, . . . où l'on parle anglais. Mais cet anglais, comme le pigeon-english de l'Inde est tout-à-fait fantaisiste. On l'appelle ici le bichelamar, c'est-à-dire la langue du commerce de la biche de mer.³⁷

³⁶ The succeeding notes in this section formed part of a review of New Caledonian beach-la-mar written originally for "Le Courrier Australien", Sydney, 14 August 1942.

³⁷ Among peculiarly New Cale-

donian terms listed by Lemire are: *farawa*, bread (from flour); *fao*, wire (from *fer*); *popinée*, woman; *pull-away*, to go, depart; *schindo*, to speak; *tomaok*, tomahawk; *louki*, to see (from *look*).

So it is that we find the natives themselves helping to spread pidgin English into a French colony, producing an inevitable mixture of influences that is by no means easy to sort out.

The position in New Caledonia has been complicated by the fact that the country's native languages are almost closed books to one another. Wrote Julien Berner in 1898:

On compte en général une vingtaine de dialectes employés par les indigènes de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. . . . Les premiers Européens établis dans le pays ont été frappés de cette confusion qui ressemble un peu à celle de la Tour de Babel.

And Lemire wrote in 1878:

Quant à la langue canaque, elle diffère entre chaque tribu, au point que les indigènes ne se comprennent pas toujours entre eux.

In the midst of such confusion, the jargon of pidgin English, which the riff-raff and scum of the seven seas had spread across the Pacific from whaling and sealing ships, probably served as a lingua franca, not only assisting Europeans to trade with the natives, but helping communication between the tribes.

Here is what Mme H. Thiercelin writes in her "Aventures d'une Parisienne à la Nouvelle-Calédonie" (Paris, 1872):

C'est triste, et pourtant c'est bien vrai—non seulement ici (en Néo-Calédonie), mais à Taïti, aux Pomotu, aux Marquises, partout enfin où flotte notre pavillon—les indigènes ne parlent que leur langue maternelle et un patois anglais. . .

Il ne savent du français qu'un mot qu'ils répètent, quand ils veulent nous désigner. Pour eux, nous sommes des *oui oui*, et tout ce qui nous appartient s'appelle comme nous *oui oui*. Cette expression ridicule témoigne de nos moyens d'action sur les peuples auxquels nous nous imposons, et du soin que nous prenons de nous les assimiler.

Wiwi (or *oui oui*), designating a Frenchman, was current in New Zealand at the beginning of last century. It is still to be heard among the natives of New Caledonia and neighbouring French islands in the form *manawiwī* (perhaps it would be better recognized if written *man-of-oui oui*), a somewhat strange conjunction of English and French that occurs also in the even better known *menzoreille*, as a Frenchman from France is called in New Caledonia.

There are several theories concerning the origin of *menzoreille* (*men-z-oreille*), the most logical of which is that in the big kanaka revolt of 1878 the French soldiers collected rewards for each native head they brought in. As complete heads were

cumbersome, they lopped off the ears (*les oreilles*) and collected their rewards on presentation of these trophies.

The regret of Mme Thiercelin that the natives seemed to know more English than French is reflected by Lemire:

On est tout étonné en débarquant à Nouméa, colonie française, d'entendre parler plutôt anglais que français. Dans les stations agricoles, une barrière s'appelle *fence*, un enclos *paddock*, un garçon de ferme *stockman*, etc.

The use of these and many kindred terms, such as *muster*, *mob*, *bucker*, a buckjumping horse, *cowboy*³⁸ (pronounced *coo-boy*), and *shop*, a restaurant or milk bar, prevails in New Caledonia today, to such an extent that it would be as impossible to root them out of the *Niaouli*'s³⁹ everyday language as it would be to rob an Australian of them.

In "Chez les Canaques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie" (1898), A. Vermast makes liberal use of terms such as *stockmen*, *store*, *station*, *run* and *paddoc* [*sic*], remarking of the last two terms, "nous avons emprunté ces deux mots à l'Australie".

In a more modern book, "Dans la Brousse calédonienne" (Paris, 1928), M. le Goupils treats us to "les cris des *stockmans*, les claquements des longs *stockwhips* . . ." Elsewhere in the book he refers to "nos bœufs de travail qu'on amène au *stockyard*", to "une jolie mare ombragée de notre *creek*", and to "les *runs* des *stations* d'élevage calédoniennes"—all of which emphasize an unexpectedly strong English and Australian influence on Caledonian speech. This influence should not, of course, be exaggerated, especially today when, theoretically at least, every kanaka child on the island receives some education in French.

M. le Goupils also gives us the mixed expression, "Sale black-fellow!" (dirty blackfellow), which also reveals the Australian influence.

One of the earliest New Caledonian borrowings of Australian idiom was the use of *la brousse* for the country in general outside the capital Noumea. Our bushmen are the New Caledonian *broussards*. Our expression *to go bush* has its counterpart in *Niaouli* pidgin, *aller la brousse*.

³⁸ An inheritance from America.

³⁹ *Niaouli* is the name of a tree that grows as profusely throughout the islands as the gum-tree grows in Australia, and has come to be re-

garded as a national symbol, in the same way as Australians chose the wattle and New Zealanders a fern leaf as national symbols. The New Caledonians call their country *le pays des niaoulis*.

CHAPTER XIV

THIS AND THAT

1.—STANDARD TERMS

WE are, as yet, too young a nation to decide the exact permanence of many of our colloquial expressions. We cannot, therefore, make a cut-and-dried differentiation between standard words and those that fall into the more popular section of our language. *Southerly buster, willy willy, larrikin, squatter, billabong, pastoralist, Australorp, waterbag, bluestone, blowholes, negrohead* or *niggerhead*—here is a number of terms each of which, in its own way, has become standard. These words have stood the test of time and are widely known. Yet some might be regarded with suspicion and be classed by purists as little better than slang.

The time factor sets a problem, too. *Anabranch* has been in Australian use since 1834; *platypussary* has made its appearance only in recent years. *Old identity* has a history of more than eighty years; *digger* (denoting a soldier) is little more than a quarter of a century old.

Obviously the matter is not solely one of time, nor is it purely one of popularity. Nor does it depend entirely upon the subject that gave rise to the word. *Australites, obsidianites, blackfellow's buttons* and *obsidian buttons* all describe small smooth lumps of black glass, presumably meteorites, found in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia; yet we are more likely to class the first two as standard than the last two. The subject matter is identical. Wherein lies the difference then, between the standard and the colloquial?

It can best be explained in the following way: The less imagery a word contains and the more utilitarian it sounds the closer it comes to the status of standard. In short, it depends largely on what we are prepared to regard as orthodox; and the measure of orthodoxy is often a measure of dullness.

When an Australian speaks of *the earlies*, for the early days, *béching boat*, for a boat engaged in the *bêche-de-mer* trade,

kangaroo hop or *kangaroo droop*, for a peculiar pose once favoured by women,¹ he is being only a little more neologistic than in his use of *stockyard*, *stockwhip*, and *bushmanship*. But the first three inventions sound less orthodox than the latter group. The former are more colourful than the latter; but, when all is said and done, they are less utilitarian and we use them less often.

Utilitarianism is not, however, an accurate measure of standardization. *Eucalyptian*, *the Pacific slope*, *rangy* (meaning mountainous), *Australophobia* and *tiersman*, are not so important to our language that we could not do without them. Yet we would tend to class these as standard, since they lack the imaginativeness and colour of colloquialisms. They do not bring us the impact of novel and unaccustomed ideas; they are the sort of words we skip over without pausing to think about them.

Take the word *Australian* and some of its many derivatives. *Australianism*, *Australiana*, *un-Australian*, *pan-Australian*, *Anglo-Australian*, and some special combinations, *Australian Church*, *Australian crawl*, *Australian Rules*—these appeal to us as being of standard type. But *Australianese* or *Australese*, *Australienne* (which is reflected in *Westralienne*) and *Australianize* may strike us as being less orthodox and therefore less entitled to be recognized as standard. Yet the latter group is certainly less colloquial than *Aussie*, *Australian grip* (a hearty handshake), *Australian flag* (a rucked shirt-tail) and *Australianity*. We could with reasonable certainty admit the first group to orthodoxy, and the third group we would class among colloquialisms or slang. But what of the intermediate group?

No, Australia is too young in the development of her language for this question of the standard and the non-standard to be carried beyond a certain stage. To attempt to make an issue of the matter would be like criticizing the appearance of a house while the bricks and building materials are still on the ground.

In another fifty or one hundred years the issue will be clear-cut; time will have accomplished what utilitarianism may not. Expressions we now consider trifling slang will be bedded deep in Australian speech; words we might now call standard will have been rejected and forgotten.

The years behind us are so few and the years ahead of us so many, that we would be foolish to usurp the judgment that properly belongs to our successors.

¹ This pose came into being with the straight-front corset,

2.—CLIMATE

In earlier chapters allusion was made to sundry Australianisms that developed as commentaries on our climate, such as *Albany doctor* and *Fremantle doctor*, for a refreshing sea-breeze in south-western Westralia, *Darling shower*, *Cobar shower*, *Wilcannia shower* and *Bedourie shower* for a duststorm.

One of the oldest terms we possess in this group is *brickfielder* which originally described a heavy cold southerly gale bringing dirt and dust to the Sydney settlement from nearby brickfields. The "Australian Encyclopaedia" says that it was "the first name given to the *southerly buster* in Sydney". *Brickfielder* has now gone out of use in N.S.W., but still survives in Victoria, where it is applied to a hot, dusty wind that blows from the interior. Partridge also lists the form *brickduster*, which, he says, was current before 1880, but textual evidence is lacking to prove his statement.

The *southerly buster* or, as refined people once preferred to call it, the *burst*, is a heavy southerly gale experienced along the east coast of Australia and in New Zealand. Especially heavy gales of this type are often called *old man southerlies* or *old man busters*.

The *black north-easter* or, as it is popularly known, the *blackie*, the *cockeye bob* or *cockeyed bob* of north-western Westralia, and the *willy willy*—these are also distinct climatic features of Australia. It is often erroneously suggested that *willy willy*, which describes a wild storm of cyclonic type, is of aboriginal origin, but it almost certainly hails from abroad. For instance, E. S. Hill, "Official Visit to Lord Howe Island" (1870), says that "miniature whirlwinds, termed *wollies* by the inhabitants, sweep from the deep gullies to the sea". Partridge lists *willywaws* for "squalls in the Straits of Magellan . . . also light variable winds elsewhere" and he suggests that it may be derived from *whirly-whirly*. W. S. Walker makes frequent reference to *willie-was* in New Zealand in "Zealandia's Guerdon" (1902). *Willy willy*, which has been current in Australia since the early 1890s may possibly have acquired this form either through aboriginal pidgin or by imitation of repetitive aboriginal names.

Cockeye bob is reputed to come from aboriginal *kack-ay*, to take care.

The inland has given us a useful word in *storm* to describe an area of fresh grass that has grown following a rain shower. Stock

is often travelled *from storm to storm* across inland wastes or is said *to storm along*.

Banker for a flooded river running banks high is also an Australian term. In "Back to Bool Bool" (1931), "Brent of Bin Bin" writes of *creek-banking rain*.

The Dry and *the Wet*, which describe the dry and monsoon seasons of the year respectively in Australian tropical regions, appear to be indigenous. *The Dry* is also used colloquially to denote desert areas inland. Thus, in the "Bulletin" of 21 January 1909 a writer speaks of "a seventy-five mile *dry*", meaning a stage of a journey across desert seventy-five miles wide.

3.—POLITICAL

The *Braddon blot* and the *Berry blight* were mentioned in Chapter X, section 4. They form part of a small group of expressions we can class as indigenous political colloquialism. Best-known of this group are *stonewall*, parliamentary obstruction—which also appears in the verbal forms *to stonewall* and *stonewalling*—and *white ant*, to sabotage, undermine, especially used in reference to a political party or a working-class movement, whence come *white-anter*² and *white-anting*. *The iron hand*, signifying the closure or gag, was popular in former days, especially in Victorian politics.

Among other terms are: *Old Hat*, a supporter of Sir James McCulloch (Victoria) in the sixties and seventies; *bunyip aristocracy* or *bunyip peerage*, nicknames derived from an abortive attempt made in 1853 to create a colonial "nobility"; *abolitionists*, the section of the Australian public who, between 1820 and 1867, fought for the cessation of convict transportation to Australia—they were also known as *anti-transportationists*, and people in favour of continued importation of convicts were called *transportationists*; *Canadian exiles*, "a number of political prisoners who in 1839 were transported from Canada to Tasmania"; and *New Australia*, a name that commemorates the earnest but unhappy effort of William Lane and his associates to found a social order based on brotherhood.

Members of a body known as the New Australia Co-Operative Settlement Association (founded in 1892) left Sydney in July 1893 for Paraguay, where *New Australia* was founded. Dissension

² *Termite* is used as a synonym for *white-anter*. Thus the Sydney "Standard", 11 February 1943: "The secretary of the party said: 'We can't say too much; there are termites about.'"

and disillusion reaped heavy toll on the enterprise and although a breakaway movement (the *Cosmans*) continued on communal lines for more than a decade the colony disintegrated after 1905. Supporters of the movement were known as *New Australians*.

Early this century the terms *yes-no*, *yes-no'er* and *yes-noism* had a vogue. A *yes-no* was a person who favoured in some measure both sides of a political question when they were generally regarded as diametrically opposed.

Atokism is a brand of political faith espoused by a trifling group of adherents in Sydney. In brief, the object of *atokism* is to abolish all interest and rents. It was originated by Louis Phillips. Primary hate of *atokists* is the *tokocracy*, "interest mongers who derive huge profits from war".

A modern expression with some political flavour is *dog-collar act*, used to describe the Australian Transport Workers' Act.

More recent political inventions are *cheer-chaser* and *caveman*. *Cheer-chaser* was first used on 29 November 1942 to describe a Federal Minister who was alleged to have been currying favour with the rank and file. *To chase cheers*, to curry favour with the mob, and *cheer-chasing* developed rapidly.

Cave, a revival of English political slang with a new application in Australia, was first used on 3 April 1943 to describe a National Service group that broke away from the United Australia Party. The term has biblical origin; it refers to the cave of Adullam in I Samuel, xxii, 1. English political use applied it to "the secession of a small body of politicians from their party on some special question; also, the malcontent party so seceding". The U.A.P. minority did not, however, split from the main body on a "special question", but on the broad basis of policy. *Caveman*, describing a member of the group, was used in print on 18 April 1943.

The following catchcries and slogans peculiar to Australia are also worth note: *Advance Australia!*³ *The Australians are One!*⁴ *Australia First! Fill Up Our Empty Spaces! Keep Australia White! Wake Up Australia! Above All For Australia!*⁵ *Australia for Australians!*⁶ *Trust in the People!*⁷ and *Unlock the Lands!*

³ Originally, a favourite motto of public men and writers in the 1850s.

⁴ Watchword of the Tasmanian abolitionists about 1850.

⁵ Adopted as a motto by Associated Press, Sydney.

⁶ Adopted as a motto by the "National Advocate", Bathurst, N.S.W.

The slogan *Victoria for Victorians*, recorded by a writer of 1883, provides a commentary on the old rivalry between Melbourne and Sydney.

⁷ An old cry which called for confidence in, not fear of, the colonists who were descendants of convicts,

4.—ALPHABETICISMS

Since they are not only indigenous, but thoroughly utilitarian, the numerous alphabeticisms that Australia has put into currency should be noted. The following examples should be sufficient to show their variety and scope:

- A.B.C.* Australian Broadcasting Commission.
- A.C.T.* Australian Capital Territory.
- A.I.M.* Australian Inland Mission.
- A.J.C.* Australian Jockey Club.
- A.L.P.* Australian Labour Party.
- B.A.W.R.A.* British Australian Wool Realization Association (*Bawra*).
- C.P.* Country Party (political).
- F.C.T.* Federal Capital Territory.
- G.P.S.* Great Public Schools.
- N.G.* New Guinea.
- N.S.W.* New South Wales.
- N.T.* Northern Territory.
- O.T.* Overland Telegraph (from Adelaide to Darwin).
- P.P.* Pastures Protection. Mainly used in country, especially in *P.P. Board*.
- Q.* Queensland.
- S.A.* South Australia.
- T.* Tasmania.
- U.A.P.* United Australia Party (political).
- U.C.P.* United Country Party (political).
- V.* Victoria. More usually *Vic*.
- V.D.L.* Van Diemen's Land (obsolete).
- W.A.* Western Australia.

A well-known Stock Exchange alphabeticism is *I.C.I.A.N.Z.*—pronounced *icy 'ands*—which stands for Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia and New Zealand.

Of more colloquial type are *S.P.*, for starting price betting; *M.L.*, an abbreviation for Maoriland, otherwise New Zealand; *G.G.*, a Governor-General; and *B.S.*, for *bullsh*.

Perhaps best-known of all alphabeticisms to which Australia has given birth is *A.N.Z.A.C.* This has now become so deep-rooted in our language in the form *Anzac* that we are liable to forget it was originally a portmanteau invention to describe the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. *Ausac* was suggested in 1943 as a term that could be used to describe the Australian and U.S. forces fighting side by side in New Guinea—Australia-U.S. Army Corps—but it achieved little popularity.

5.—CRAFT SLANG

By its nature craft slang is essentially used by limited groups. An Australian barber calls a man with a tough beard a *bong* and a man who parts with a tip a *sling*, but these are probably rarely heard by the customer. Australian seamen call a second engineer a *deucer* and give the name *hoodle* to a stew made by the stokehole watch at 2 a.m.; they describe a master mariner's ticket for one of our small coastal ships as a *mangrove ticket*, but the public may never come across these terms.

There are, of course, expressions that belong to workers in general, such as the verb *to graft* and its derivatives *grafter* and *grafting*, all of which have English dialectal origins. *To get the hunt*, *spear*, *shunt* or *wallop* is to be fired; *to spear* or *harpoon a job* is to obtain work; *to jack the contract*, *to snatch it* or *to snatch one's time* is to leave a job; *to sweat off*, is to go slow or mark time in one's work.

Long existence of a craft does not always result in its jargon becoming known to the general public.

Here, for example, is a number of expressions used by tailors, all apparently indigenous: *to do a bake*, to do work at home; *cat's face*, a small business opened by a journeyman tailor; *to chance one's wing*, to speak uncertainly, to make a shot in the dark; *jack the ripper*, a worthless type of person; *to have one's sleeve-line twisted*, to be in difficulties; *can you spare the boot?* will you lend me some money? *someone's staytape is uneven*, a person is dishonest or underhand in his activities; *tiger*, an apprentice; *wrong way of the charley* (used of tweed cloth) on the bias.

Probably few people have heard this type of slang before. In the same way we find newspaper workers using expressions that are unknown to the public at large: *grass*, a temporary hand on a printing staff; *dinkus*, a small drawn illustration to break up an article; *tibby*,⁸ a paper of magazine size (probably from the dialectal *tibby*, a term of endearment or diminutive); *snuff box* and *stiff box*, a newspaper morgue; the *Canberra Circus*, reporters who cover the Federal Parliament.

A waterfront term of fairly recent origin is *sniper*, a non-union labourer. *Pirate* is used similarly. A *bull* is a wharf-labourer engaged under the pick-up method; this method has now been displaced in many Australian ports by a rotary gang system.

⁸ Also applied to a small girl in Australia and probably derived from this. However, sixteenth and seven-

teenth century English had *tib*, a girl. *Tibby*, a calf, was in Suffolk dialect.

In Trades Hall jargon a *bell-wether* is a unionist who leads a return to work when men are resisting union instructions to end a strike. A *tombstone* is a union vote recorded in the name of a dead man. *To get a bung* means to have pay docked for being late.

There are many terms which, while depending on the existence of crafts, have not originated so much within those crafts as within popular speech. For instance, there is the Melbourne use of *connie*, (bus or tram) conductor, and the Sydney use of *trammie*, *troubadour* and *troub*. There is the Tasmanian *piner*, one who cuts pine-trees, and the Westralian *jarrah-jerker*, a jarrah timber worker. There are terms like *warb*, a circus labourer; *snake-charmers*, *snakes* or *lizards*, railway platelayers; *black coat*, a hotel waiter; *tuberculars*, men who construct tube-steel scaffolding; *chin* or *bluechin*, an actor; *lightning jerker* or *lightning squirter*, a telegraph operator—these are ancillary to true craft slang, though by no means divorced from it.

Although the days of hansom cabs and cabmen are a long way behind us, several Australianisms that developed round that profession are still current. *Duck-shoving*, used in modern times to describe political wire-pulling and unscrupulousness in general, had its origin in Melbourne cabmen's slang in the late 1860s. *To duck-shove* (in these times we often abbreviate the verb to *shove*) meant to gain an unfair advantage over a fellow workman by breaking into a cab rank ahead of him. Anyone who pushes in ahead of others or usurps their rights is said to *duck-shove*; it has also been used to describe petty thievery and cheating. *Touching off*, *gagging* and *plumming* were other old terms. *Touching off* was once the Sydney equivalent of *duck-shoving*. *Gagging* meant touting for fares in the city streets by cabmen (a forbidden practice); and *plumming* was the practice adopted by *plummers*—i.e. men who possessed cabmen's licences but no vehicles—who *did a mind* for a regular driver.

Another old survival is *robbo*, which was used in Sydney fifty years ago to denote a sulky. It was derived from a man named Robinson, who hired out horses and traps for 4s. a half-day. He acquired the nickname *Four Bob Robbo*, which was eventually transferred to the vehicle. A writer in the "Bulletin" of 23 January 1897 also declared: "*Robbo* has, in an extensive Sydney circle, come to mean anything unsatisfactory."

It might be thought that an expression of this nature would be doomed to an early death, if only for the reason that sulkies

are now rarely seen. But it raises its head again in K. Tennant's "Foveaux" (1939) in which the author provides the story:

There was old Bert Robinson—God-rest-his-soul—'e's gorn now, poor fellow. Ever heard of Bert Robinson? No, I don't suppose you would. 'E kept a livery stable down at the Foot. I s'pose you've 'eard of the Four-bob Robbos, then? The chaps used to go an' hire a cart for four bob and take it round loaded with vegetables. The kids used to call after 'em, "Four Bob Robbo, Four Bob Robbo!" Old Bob Noblett, 'e's an old man now, but I can remember when Bob Noblett was a four-bob robbo.

Although scarcely entitled to be called craft slang the following terms used by consumptives are worth noting: *mike* or *wog*, a consumptive; *mikes*, T.B. microbes; *mikehouse*, a T.B. sanatorium; *blow* or *squirt*, a haemorrhage; *fill*, artificial pneumothorax, i.e., the injection of air into a lung; *poso*, sputum which still has positive T.B. infection, e.g., *to spit poso*, *to be poso*, to be consumptive.

6.—EXCLAMATIONS

Though, as will be seen in the next section, the Australian often resorts to strong language in order to express his emotions and enthusiasms, he has a store of mild, or reasonably mild, ejaculations that can be called upon in polite society and cause no offence. Earlier in this book some of the many variations on the theme of *stone the crows!* and *starve the lizards!* were given. These are well-known, but they are not by any means representative.

My cabbage-tree! dates back to days when cabbage-tree hats were in favour. *My colonial!* and *my colonial oath!* were other mild expletives. Much on the same line are *strike me handsome!* *holy farmer!* *spare me days!* *well, I'm willy-willied!* *for crying out loud!* *blimey Teddy!* and *myst all critey!*

Ejaculations which bear with them some hint of approval or surprise vary from the popular *whacko!* to the mild *my word!*⁹ and *too right!* the disguised vulgarisms *myking oath!* and *kern oath!* and the circumlocutory phrases *more hair on your chest!* *there's no doubt about you!* *bet you what you like!* *you beaut!* *only a rumour!* *same here!* and *half your luck!*

Disapproval or disagreement is indicated by a number of expressions which include the now-dated *bouril!*¹⁰ and *not on*

⁹ Recorded in Australia in 1852. The "Oxford Dictionary's" first English quote is 1857. It has been widely used in this country. In "Robbery Under Arms" (1881), for instance,

Boldrewood employs it more than thirty times.

¹⁰ Popular in the early 1930s as a variant of *bullsh.*

your tintype! the terse *upya!* *pigs!* *stick it!* *in your dipper!* and *dickin!* and the more lengthy, but scarcely less effective, *go and have a roll!* *who's robbing this coach!*¹¹ *chop it out!* and *break it down!*

So long! has been in Australian use for so many years that it might almost be said to belong to us, but, according to Partridge, it was originally English. Some authentic local equivalents, however, are *hooray!* *aroo!* *hooroo!* and *see you!* which have been employed for many years, especially in rural areas, to denote "good-bye".

Just quietly! between you and me, *wake it up!* *hurry!* and *don't wake it up!* don't talk about it! are a few more ejaculations of general type, not particularly notable, but useful enough on an Australian's lips to make them worth inclusion.

7.—THE VULGARISM¹²

It has been part of the national destiny of Australia that profanity should have provided an accompaniment, or at least an undertone, to our social growth. It was not only that our original settlers were convicts and the sweepings of English backstreets well-versed in vulgar speech, but that the country itself was one to stir exasperation and helpless fury in even the most patient soul. The men who went out over the coastal mountains to fight the bush and the interior carried with them no more than the ordinary mortal's share of endurance; and what drought and flood and heat did not do to break that endurance, disease, stock thieves, unreliable markets and avaricious banks did. So there were curses to spare against the foul tricks of destiny.

There are three reasonably well-defined influences to be noted in the perpetuation of vulgar speech in Australia: (i) the city, originally represented in convict settlements, (ii) the outback, and (iii) war.

In "The Fell Tyrant" (1836), the author, commenting on Sydney life, declares: "The whole study of both sexes is drinking, gambling and whoring. Their language is the most profane."

In 1850 a visitor to Melbourne said in that southern city, "Oaths, execrations and obscenity grate upon your ear."

¹¹ Reputed to be associated with bushranging days, this expression is equivalent to "mind your own business!"

¹² "Our dictionaries, while they tell us much, yet will not tell us

all. How shamefully rich is the language of the vulgar everywhere in words which are not allowed to find their way into books."—R. C. Trench, "On the Study of Words" (1851).

Something of the Australian's reputation for strong language must have gone abroad at an early stage in our history, for Francis H. Nixon, in "Population: A Plea for Victoria" (1862), makes the note: "According to a portion of the British Press we are all more or less . . . given to interlacing our everyday conversation with slang and blasphemy."

And the Reverend A. Polehampton, whose "Kangaroo Land" was published in the same year, showed that new chums were put on their mettle by the local vulgates:

As swearing is an unusually common habit among the colonists new arrivals often endeavour, and most successfully, too, to become proficient in this easily acquired art, and soon add the stock of oaths peculiar to the colony (and very peculiar some of them are) to the "home" vocabulary.

One of the few good words spoken on Australia's account—at least, it asserted that our use of "undesirable epithets" was not so extensive as it might be—was uttered by G. J. James in "Shall I Try Australia?" (1892). He pointed out that the average Australian was "capable of improvement" in the matter of vulgar speech, but added:

Not that one meets with the cold-blooded profanity which is so commonly used in certain parts of America; but many expressions of a more than questionable nature are somewhat generally used, and boys and even young children have very often a stock of bad language in active service, by far too plentiful, which I suppose did not originate with them.

In the "Bulletin" of 20 October 1900 it was recorded that at Balaclutha, New Zealand,¹³ a man named W. Evans—to whom a suitable monument is surely due—was sentenced to four days' jail "for using obscene language to his team of bullocks". To a country such as Australia, which has developed a deep appreciation for the *bullocky*¹⁴ and his colourful language, this salutary sentence handed out by the New Zealand Bench will probably seem more than a little unjust.

In 1848 H. W. Haygarth, in his "Bush Life in Australia", felt obliged to note: "Profane swearing prevails throughout the

¹³ Profanity is also widely current in New Zealand, although perhaps to less degree than in Australia. In "New Zealand After Fifty Years" (1889), Edward Wakefield noted that shearers and swagmen in the Dominion "use shocking language and seem to take a pride in rivalling one

another in the ingenuity and elaborateness of their oaths and epithets."

¹⁴ Barrère and Leland, "Dictionary of Slang" (1897), note: "Bullockirs in Australia are as proverbial as bargees or Billingsgate fishwives in England for the forcibleness of their language."

interior of New South Wales to an extent hardly conceivable, but by those who have actually witnessed [*sic*] it."

A little later—in 1864—Charles R. Thatcher, in "The Colonial Songster", put the bullocky in his rightful niche of notoriety when he wrote the jingle:

If nice expressions you would learn
Colonial and new,
Some bullock driver who is bogged
Is just the man for you!

A sentiment of similar type was expressed in the "Australasian Printers' Keepsake" (1885) by a jongleur who sang of:

Those brawny owners of fat sheep and lambs
Whose creeks and language are both full of dams.

The bullocky and his kind have proved so expert, indeed, in adding new splendours to the language of profanity that few of their inheritors have been deemed worthy of being grouped in the same class. The Australian soldier is, perhaps, the only one who can be said to have run him close. His effort goes back to Boer War days, as shown in this quotation from the "Bulletin" of 7 July 1900:

Correspondents in South Africa pay a unanimous tribute to the great Australian Blanky, and state that, in curse-language, the man from this great blank continent is laps ahead of Tommy Atkins. When an occasion arrives for extra-special profanity, the Cornstalk or Gumsucker is deputed to meet the case, and he never fails. Even mules and bullocks which have become absolutely impervious to the indigenous curse, wake up suddenly when the Australian attacks with his exotic objurgation.¹⁵

In World War No. 1 profanity was reputedly so current among the troops that a Clean Lip Brigade was established by a Church of England padre, every member of the brigade pledging himself to count ten when he felt like swearing. Some agitation was

¹⁵ A somewhat similar view was expressed by Bennett Burleigh, London "Daily Telegraph" war correspondent, in 1900: "When we look for variety, vigour and vilification, we call upon the colonies to give due lurid expression to exacerbated feelings. There is no monotonous reiteration about their extensive diction. . . . The very dumb brutes

acknowledge their giftedness, for oxen and mules, which would not strain a pound or budge an inch for native or British objurgation, the instant a Colonial takes up his parable, hasten to break thews, muscle and bones, rather than stand stuck in a drift and have such abuse showered upon them."

raised in World War No. 2¹⁶ to have this Clean Lip Brigade revived. In the "Sunday Sun" of 3 May 1942 comment was made on the "increasing bad language among Australian men and women" and a correspondent declared, "swearing seems to be the rule in ordinary conversation in this country".

There have, however, been staunch defenders of Australian profanity—especially of the effective adjective *bloody*—among whom was Will Vernon, who put in a word for the digger in the "Bulletin" of 29 June 1922:

The true Australian oath was a thing of beauty, providing a speedy means of relief for depression, exasperation, hard luck . . . It was descriptive, vigorous and decisive . . . It was seldom used in idle or casual conversation. Because of that it failed to stick as a habit with many of those boys and men who were jettisoned temporarily on the ash-heap of war.

The *Great Australian Adjective* acquired that name during the 1890s, but it had been in use many years before. For instance, F. Eldershaw commented in "Australia As It Really Is" (1854) that, "When irate, the old hand appears to be violently addicted to adjectives, and *blood* is invariably his most convenient circulating medium."

William Kelly, author of "Life in Victoria" (1859), felt constrained to offer this apology for using *bloody* in his book:

I must be excused for the frequent use of this odious word in giving colonial dialogues, because general conversation amongst the middle and lower classes at the antipodes is always highly seasoned with it.

Here is another comment, given by F. Fowler, "Southern Lights and Shadows" (1859):

Your thoroughbred gumsucker never speaks without apostrophising his oath and interlarding his diction with the crimsonest of adjectives.

In a leading article on "those beautiful and expressive words, Damn, Blast and Bloody", Sydney "Truth" of 15 May, 1898, declared: "Bloody has been so completely vulgarised and has descended so low, that it can never be picked up again." A bad guess as it has turned out to be.

¹⁶In the Sydney "Mirror" of 9 October 1941, a military spokesman at Victoria Barracks was interviewed on the use of profanity in the army. The "Mirror" reported: "He said that the use of bad language in the A.I.F. was always deprecated, but

as it was part of the common colloquial speech no special action had been taken and it was not usually made the basis of an offence unless of a nature likely seriously to prejudice good order and discipline."

How *bloody* first acquired the nickname *Great Australian Adjective* is uncertain, but it was probably through the agency of the "Bulletin".¹⁷ For instance, in the 18 August 1894 issue of that journal it was stated:

The "Bulletin" calls it the *Australian adjective* simply because it is more used and used more exclusively by Australians than by any other allegedly civilised nation.

Cornelius Crowe, who compiled a dictionary of Australian slang in 1895, dismisses the expletive with the comment, "a word used very often inadvertently by the uneducated". More than thirty years later, the critic A. G. Stephens became so wrath over the currency of *bloody* in this country that he penned the following to the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 28 March 1927:

There is a common word often heard in Sydney streets on the lips of men in common talk, and shocking and disgraceful talk it is. . . . This vileness exists in other Australian cities, and in some British and foreign cities, but really we have never heard it as bad as we hear it in Sydney. . . . Thoughtlessness, carelessness and horrible custom allow it to go without interference and without reproach. . . . The literary jesting with the word by such Australian writers as Goodge and Dennis, however excusable, is not the most creditable feature of their writings. . . . The constant use of the word by thousands of Sydney residents is vile. . . . We do trust that this public protest will help to remove a public blot on the life of Sydney.¹⁸

However earnest, Stephens was fighting an uphill battle against a habit long ingrained in Australian speech. By 1941, Dr George Mackaness¹⁹ could do little more than proffer this resigned comment:

In my boyhood days [in Australia] it had undoubtedly become a wicked swear word. Now we are witnessing the process of "elevation", operating to place it amongst the nobler words of the language. I mean the Australian Language.

17 The "Bulletin" of 11 February 1893 noted: "A certain 'slang' dictionary published in England dis-courses on the word *bloody*. This is described as an adjective of common use in Australia, where it is employed to express various shades of meaning, i.e. 'It is a very hot day' becomes, when Australised, 'It is a —' and so on."

18 A correspondent in the "Herald" of 31 March 1927, replying to Stephens, noted pertinently that, "There is an even worse word, a low

disgusting word, which has come into common use of late". In the same paper, on 2 April 1927, "Disgusted Aussie" wrote: "Twenty years ago foul mouths were something to note, but now the everyday conversation of the bulk of the toilers is an endless hellbroth of blasphemy, blood and sewage." Another correspondent on 4 April suggested that a "No-swearing Week" should be held, but his suggestion had no takers.

19 In the "Herald" of 1 March 1941,

In spite of many criticisms Australians do not use more vulgarisms than the English and Americans. They merely use the same vulgarisms more often.

The vocabulary of vulgar speech used throughout the English-speaking world is much smaller than generally thought. Partridge estimates that only about 0.5 per cent of the expressions in his "Dictionary of Slang" are vulgarisms.

Not more than 1 per cent of Australia's slang inventions are vulgarisms or near-vulgarisms. Admittedly we have produced some colourful and effective phrases of a profane nature, but it is not against these that the critic usually rails when he talks of the popularity of vulgar speech in this country. His main complaint is against a group of unprintable words.

If we include *damn*, *hell* and *devil*, we find that there are sixteen cardinal vulgarisms. These include the four Indispensable Bs—*bastard*, *bitch*, *bloody* and *bugger*. The subject matter of the remainder is almost exclusively biological.

The repetitive nature of Australian vulgarism has had the important effect of robbing many objectionable words—especially the Bs—of their taint of indecency. Offensive they may still be, but a good deal depends on the tone of voice in which they are spoken. *Bastard*²⁰ and *bugger* are frequently used as terms of genial or even affectionate address between men. The fact that Australian women also use the four Bs widely is additional evidence that they are becoming innocuous.

In Newtown Court, Sydney, in January 1939 a man was charged with having used *indecent* language in that, etc., he used the word *bloody*. The magistrate, R. C. Atkinson, held that the word might be sometimes offensive, but not indecent. The charge was accordingly altered to one of *offensive* language and a fine of £1 was imposed.²¹

As the Sydney "Telegraph" of 23 January 1939 observed:

It is possible to be offensive without being indecent, but it is impossible to use indecent language without being offensive. Whether or not certain terms are indecent depends very often on the circumstances in which they

²⁰ Frequently rendered *blankard* in print, especially in "Smith's Weekly" and the "Bulletin", in which outback and soldier stories are retailed. During World War No. 2 *bastard* has been used increasingly in print in Australia. In the army journal "Salt", in May 1943, a soldier wrote asking for "a chance to get stuck

into these Jap bastards". The appeal was republished in numerous newspapers.

²¹ In Sydney Divorce Court on 22 June 1942 Mr Justice Halse Rogers said: "The word *bloody* is so common in modern parlance that it is not regarded as swearing."

are used. A great deal depends on the person to whom the language was directed and who could hear it.

When the United States fleet was in Australian waters in 1941, a metropolitan daily published advice to Australians on "the use of four adjectives, including the great Australian one" in the presence of U.S. visitors. An American, resident in this country, was quoted as saying:

They're fighting words over our side of the world. It took months before I finished shaping up when some Australian, with all the friendliness in the world, called me a pleasant old so-and-so or a — old —.

This lack of insult in Australian profanity²² is a point that should be noted, not as an excuse for the continued use of objectionable words, but as evidence that even in his employment of vulgar terms that originated in the Old World the Australian has managed to express something of his own personality.

The development of *bludger* as a pejorative in this country owes a great deal to the currency of *bugger*. The latter is generally less offensive in Australia than the former, although *bludger* was used originally to describe a harlot's bully, and could not in fact be labelled indecent.²³ *Bludging* is a participle often used adjectivally

Socker and *socking*, as synonyms for an old English vulgarism widely current in this country, are recent inventions; so is *dirty big* as a synonym for *bloody*

It is probable that several of the vulgarisms against which objection is raised today will gradually fall into disuse for the

²² Extract from a story in the Perth "Sunday Times" of 7 December 1941: "Two unhurried eyes regarding them in turn and a slow deliberate voice: 'You're two of the — wretches looking for bushrangers, aren't you?' 'Now, now . . .' began McGinnerty, who knew the lack of insult in Australian profanity."

²³ An indication of the current tendency to regard *bludger* as indecent may be seen in the following quotation from the "Sunday Telegraph" of 13 September 1942: "Said elderly Mr White, swallowing a piece of noodle: 'Don't take any notice of that uncouth animal. He is only a —' (Mr White used a word which indicates that a man is

living on the immoral earnings of a woman)." Yet on the same page the "Sunday Telegraph" used "dirty little bitch", and, slightly earlier in the year—17 May 1942—had put the following into print: "Renowned for many years as a Redbaiter of dictatorial aptitudes, Thorby yet amazed even his own colleagues when, in December 1938, he said he wouldn't 'spit' on John Curtin (*spit* is a euphemism)."

The evolution of *bludger* into *bludgasite* (a combination of *bludger* and *parasite*) is perhaps also symptomatic of popular disapproval of the original term. *Bludgasite* was first used in the Australian army journal "Salt" in March 1943.

simple reason that they have been laboured too long and have been decolourized.

Interpolation, which Partridge describes as "a minor characteristic of unconventional speech" in England, has been well-developed in Australia. Principal interpolations used are *bloody*, *f—g*, and their euphemisms—e.g. *transconti-bloody-mental*, *abso-f—g-lutely*, *inde-bloody-pendent*. These efforts represent attempts to intensify and to colour, but they tend to become wearisome and have little to recommend them.

CHAPTER XV

NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

1.—LOWBROWISM

AUSTRALIA is too young as a nation to have developed a great variety of recognizable characteristics. But in sundry ways we have begun to express our individuality, and that individuality is nowhere better seen than in the language we use.

There is, for instance, a marked feature of "lowbrowism" in our speech—a deliberate speaking-down, an avoidance of polish and finesse in speech, the adoption of a hard-boiled, to-hell-with-the-King's-English view.

Declared the "Sydney Morning Herald" in a leader on 27 July 1929:

The fear of being called a highbrow seems to have taken such a hold upon these [Australian] men and women that they use every device in their utterance to demonstrate that their brows are medium or almost low.

The leader-writer pointed out that slang was becoming an increasing characteristic of educated Australians, and added:

It is all very well to affect a certain eclecticism towards popular words that are not yet up to dictionary standards, but that is no reason for abandoning the King's English in favour of flippancies of the street corner.

The wide use of slang by all classes in Australia, from the best educated to the most patently ignorant, is reflected in the emasculation of certain vulgarisms, upon which comment was made in the previous chapter. When words like *bloody*, *bastard* and *bugger* cease to be regarded as vulgar, it is obvious that they are becoming national possessions. They can become national possessions only when everyone is personally acquainted with expressions of this nature.

Lowbrowism is typified by something more than this, however. It is consonant with what the Australian calls his "love of sport";

his over-accented masculinity and his contempt for anything polished and refined; his practice of seeking loopholes to criticize or condemn; his acceptance of the theory that education is nothing more than a suitable occupation for children; his glorification of things which he imagines set him off to the world as a hard-living sort of fellow.

All these features are acceptable in reasonable proportion; but at the expense of refinement in thought, feeling and speech they are obviously demerits. As A. J. Marshall wrote in "Australia Limited": "In many ways the Australian resembles an anaesthetized guinea-pig or a pithed frog: the body works, so to speak, but the mind doesn't."

Here is how J. North put one aspect of the matter in the "Bulletin" in 1920:

[There is a] tendency to ridicule and scorn anyone who is careful in speech. Many Labour leaders who know better, and can talk well, adopt the diction of the ignorant when addressing meetings of their supporters. "No blanky gyver about me, 'n no kid, I kin tell yuh!" they say in effect; and they usually tell a story of some "bloomin' torf", evincing meticulous care in the use of aspirates and terminations. The well-trained audience is invariably delighted.

So it comes about that the decently-educated lad who enters an office or shop or workroom has an unhappy time until he conforms, and mangles his pleasant speech to the curious shapes and sounds affected by the "Lorumme" Australian or the harsh-spoken Pommy. He is sneered at as a sissy if he ventures to employ an unusual term, and even in the matter of technical phrases he is called upon to adopt the substitutes invented by those who were either too careless or too ignorant to learn the right words.

Here, of course, the question is reduced to one of education, which has a close link with lowbrowism of any form. Through the stupidity and short-sightedness of our legislators, our system of education has been left to limp behind in our social growth. Less money is spent per capita on education in this country than in Britain, South Africa or New Zealand. It is inevitable that we should suffer as a result.

Here is part of the picture drawn by R. Horne in "Australian Facts and Prospects" (1859), showing that the problem is not new:

They [the young manhood of Victoria] have no relish for learning, or philosophy, or science; no idea of the distinction between verse-spinning and poetry, painting and daubing, the music of Mendelssohn and the brass band in a boozing bar; no taste for reading anything but trash, or seeing anything on the stage but burlesque . . . and no ruling impulse

with respect to literature, the fine arts, manners, the respect and delicacy due to ladies . . . no ruling impulse, let me say, but one, and that one is desecration. The majority of the young men . . . possess no educational knowledge, no talents, no accomplishments or taste themselves, and they cordially hate and pretend to scorn and ridicule all those who possess any such acquirements. . . . They substitute the arrogance of ignorant youth and the "game to fight" for all other qualifications.

Those comments are as true now as they ever have been.

Only one thing can remedy this state of affairs. Our educational system must be vastly improved. If Scotland can spend £37 5s. per pupil on education, why should Australian children be fobbed off with a paltry £25 5s.? Why should South African and New Zealand children be worth more than ours?

Ignorance and lowbrowism are revealed nowhere more succinctly than through language. No matter how quick the wit it cannot disguise lack of knowledge. This is manifest in Australia in extraordinary misuses of words, not only by ordinary people, but by supposed leaders of public thought—politicians, journalists, city councillors, clergymen, lawyers, business men.

Here are a few examples culled from a file of lapses that I have kept for some years:

NEWSPAPER EDITOR. *facksimple*, facsimile; *sweedo amachoor*, pseudo-amateur; *man-of-warring*, manoeuvring; *preesay*, precis; *creeshay*, crèche.

ALDERMAN. *Centopah*, cenotaph; *expediate*, expedite; *disrepancy*, discrepancy; *technalities*, technicalities; *stupendious*, stupendous; *convive at*, connive at; *innudeeno*, innuendo.

PLAYWRIGHT. *surveillance*, surveillance; *diaphanious*, diaphanous; *expletives*, expletives; *rekroo-iting*, recruiting; *cess le gerr*, c'est la guerre.

NOVELIST. *heggemy*, hegemony; *proriety*, priority; *tolitarian*, totalitarian; *spiritous*, spirituous.

CIVIL SERVANT. *several*, several; *mountainious*, mountainous; *greviance*, grievance; *vagginer*, vagina; *poplous*, populous; *ignot*, ingot.

In studying corruptions of this nature one is forced to two main conclusions: (i) that the person has either not been educated or not educated long enough; (ii) that he has never read the word properly, or been corrected in his error, or bothered to take notice of correction.

Unfortunately errors of this type abound in Australia. Practically every time a politician opens his mouth he produces mutilations like these in addition to his customary corruption of vowel sounds.

The use of *you*s instead of "you" was noted by G. L. James

("Shall I Try Australia?") in 1892. A writer in the "Bulletin" of 16 December 1899 recorded the following "speech oddities of the Big Scrub": *beleft* for believed; *heared* for heard; *reducted* for reduced; *prefered* for proffered; *bothered* for betrothed. Another writer in the same paper of 10 February 1900 added these to the list: *brung* for brought; *seen* for saw; *shottin'* for shooting, especially in the phrase *to shot stones*.

To shot instead of to shoot has been in wide Australian currency since 1898. *To left* instead of to leave is also recorded in the nineties.

These examples of catachresis take us into the realm of grammar wherein the Australian is noticeably weak. The following are typical lapses:

He didn't know better *but* to do that.
 The man *whom*, he said, did it.
 Never *ever*.
 It isn't *that* bad.
 Between you and *I*.
 He does it *like* I do.
 I don't see it *like*.

The Australian is an adept in the many forms of pleonasm, repeated negatives, misrelated participles and possessives and general misuse of even the simplest rules of "pure" grammar. There unfortunately exists such little appreciation for correct modes of speech that his own lack of interest in improvement is confirming his errors into national habits.

It should not be thought that the Australian is entirely insensitive to reproaches on his manner of speaking. The close interest taken in the development of Austral English for well over half a century confirms the fact that we are, as a whole, deeply absorbed in words and their uses. But sufficient weight is not being thrown, either by example or educational encouragement, against the tide of error and grammatical misuse.

I make no suggestion that our flair for inventing and using colourful slang should be curbed. Nothing short of a national catastrophe could curb it, anyway. But there is this point to be noted: at the present time Austral English is, more or less, a national possession. Everyone speaks it, educated and uneducated alike, and this is largely due to our national cult of low-browism.

Our slang is already beginning to fall into dialectal groups, however. We will be able to measure our future educational

progress by the differences developed between, say, the popular mode of speech in Queensland and that in Victoria, between that in New South Wales and in Tasmania. Certain speech habits will, in short, become characteristic of groups rather than of the entire nation. A higher standard of education will not curb our word-making enthusiasm; it will even accentuate it. But it will mean that Australians as a whole will not meet on the common level of corrupted speech.

2.—WORD FEATURES

The bald allegation by V. Desmond in "The Awful Australian" (1911) that "there is no humour in Australian slang" was proof that she had paid little attention to either our slang or our humour. There is a peculiar meiosal form of humour in our slang, somewhat hard for foreigners to appreciate. Thus we say a man *performs* when he is indulging in a wild frenzy of anger or vituperation; we call a wild confusion or a particularly difficult task a *picnic*; we say *not so bloody, not so dusty, not so clever* (the word *so* can be replaced by *too* in all these cases) when we mean good or even excellent; we call a bath an *annual*; we call a violent argument a *session* or *a bit of a barney*; *to go hostile* means to become angry; *miserable* is used to denote mean-spirited; *willing* means strenuous or hearty; *wouldn't it!* is an exclamation of bitter disgust; we say a thing is *not good enough* when we mean it is exceedingly bad; we say *not too wonderful* when we mean very bad; we say we *can't complain* or *growl*, that things *could be worse*, when we have every reason to be overjoyed and satisfied. In short we are indulging in what is known as meiosis or "lessening"—a form of understatement particularly dear to the Australian humorist.

In an examination of the "Development Of An Australian Social Type" (1932), P. R. Cole pointed out that our humour "has a special quality of its own, that of inversion. . . . The Australian humorist regularly says the opposite of what he means."

The meiosal type of humour has been commented on by sundry writers in the past. Thomas Wood devoted a couple of pages to Australian humour in "Cobbers":

The native-born [joke] is gold, pure gold. It is a joke worth hearing. It comes pat, faintly mocking, hiding a sting in its tail. It is exactly what you might expect from that thin-lipped Australian mouth . . .

But the best stories will never be published. Too broad? Not necessarily.

Too vigorous. Too full of words you must not print. The words that won the War. The Big Five. Australian stories need them all and use them lavishly. The effect is stunning.

The propagation of vulgar terms in jokes might be regarded as another feature of our lowbrowism.

Just as we have invested humour with some characteristics of our own, so we have put recognizable features into our popular speech.

There is, for instance, an astonishingly large number of harsh-sounding words in our vocabulary. Here is a taste of them: *snack, vip, cronk, shick, spruik, plonk, arve, shong, warb, gup, zack, spurge, tonk, ziff, rort, choc, ding, pat, sprog, chow, cow,* and *ponk*. And here are some with two or more syllables: *borak, bunyip, jumbuck, jackeroo, yakka, fizgig, bosker, dinkum, grouter, wouser, onkus* and *dingbat*.

We also have a flair for tampering with words and mutilating their appearance. In a note to the word *super*, for a station or police superintendent, the "Modern Dictionary" (1912: Macmillan and Company) declared: "Colonial slang is given to such-like abbreviations."

In this way we find *dile* clipped out of crocodile; *go* and *hanna* from goanna; *tri* from triantelope¹; *kanga* and *roo* from kangaroo; *mu* from emu; *lew* from curlew; *pine* from porcupine—to itemize only a few of the many clippings from fauna. We find *dage* (a hard "g") shortened from *dago*; *panz* from *pansy* (an effeminate); *Tatt's*² from Tattersall's; *uni* from university; *Vic.* from Victoria; *New South* from New South Wales; *sesquis* which was used to denote the sesqui-centenary celebrations; *upta* from *up to putty*; *dofer*, a cigarette butt, from "do for afterwards"; *House of Reps* from the House of Representatives; *Hen* from the Christian name Henry; *Barb* from Barbara; *perc* from percolator; *corp* from corporal, and so on in their scores.

When Child Endowment was introduced in Australia in 1941

¹ *Triantelope* is popularly applied to a large, hairy spider—a member of the Sparassinae. It was reputedly corrupted from the word "tarantula", but, as there are no true tarantulas in Australia, its use is justified. The development of the indigenous *goanna* from the imported word "iguana" is a variation of similar type.

² *To take a ticket in Tatt's* is to buy a ticket in Tattersall's sweepstakes, Tasmania. *Safe as Tatt's* is synonymous with perfect safety. (It may be added that the *Casket* is the popular name by which the Golden Casket Lottery, Queensland, is known.)

it quickly produced the expressions *dows* and *duds*, *dows* signifying those children for whom parents received endowment allowances, and *duds* those for whom parents received nothing.

It can be seen that the Australian is not particular where he clips words—the beginning, middle or end, 'it is the same to him. He even clips what has already been clipped. Thus "this afternoon" becomes *this after*, then *this afto* or *this arvo* and finally *this arve*; communist becomes *commo* and then *com*; in receipt of unemployed sustenance becomes *on the susso* and then *on the suss*. It is to be expected, therefore, that he will not be shy in cutting down even those expressions which he has invented himself, such as *pom* as a clipped version of *pommy*; *hop* from *johnhop*; *ding* from *dingbat*; *my troubs!* from *my troubles!*; *stick* from *stickybeak*.

Certain modesty seems to have prompted the following shortenings: *kern oath!* *bullsh*, *cowsh*, *frogsh*, *filmsh*, *shouse*, and *touse*, although here, once again, the primary cause has probably been our natural discontent with leaving words as they are.

Another Australian characteristic has been developed through our extensive use of hypocorism. In English slang the addition of the final syllable *-y* or *-ie* is almost invariably an indication that the word has been rendered an endearment or familiarism, but in Australia a different process has taken place. The *-y* or *-ie* suffix has become masculine in this country.³ Thus a *roughie*, *toughie*, *hottie*, *crookie*, *swiftie*, *smartie* will all be heard in male conversation to describe a joke or trick that is either agreeable or disagreeable. In the same way men employ expressions like *adjie*, an adjutant; *batty*, a batman; *crocky*, a crocodile; *hookie*, a hook-worm inspector; *jelly*, gelignite; *maggie*, a magpie; *ringie*, a two-up ringkeeper; *connie* and *trammie*, a tram conductor; *gummy*, a shark; *Corrie*, a Corriedale sheep; *mushie*, a mushroom; *newey*, a new idea; *queany*, a quean or effeminate male; *rubby*, a hotel; *chutty*, chewing-gum; *gooly*, a gob of phlegm; *sticky*, a stickybeak or inquisitive person; *shrewdy*, a shrewd or intelligent person; *lairy*, flashily dressed.

There are even better-known Australianisms than these with the *-y* or *-ie* ending: *billy*, *cocky*, *humpy*, *pommy*, *bingey*, *yabbie* and many more.

³ "Most natives of Australia have acquired the odd habits of adding *ie* to many of their words. For example, in the Antipodes articles are

described as *goodie*, *baddie* and *swellie*."—"The Fact Digest" (U.S.), August 1937.

Then there is a group of terms that have *-ssie* or *-zzie* suffixes. The use of the simple *-y* or *-ie* suffix has been developed to some extent in the U.S., but the *-ssie* and *-zzie* group is quite distinct.

Here are some of the best-known examples: *Aussie* (and its associate *Aussieland*); *Tassie* or *Tazzie*; *Brissie* for Brisbane; *Kozzie* for Mount Kosciusko; *bitzie*, that which is made of bits and pieces, or an adjective descriptive of the nature; *boysie*, a nickname for a boy; *goozie*, a gooseberry; *gussie*, an effeminate male; *mozzie*, a mosquito; *possie*, a position or place; *prossie*, a prostitute; *cozzie*, a swimming costume; *trezzie*, a threepence; *quizzie*, a newspaper or radio quiz.⁴

Another well-developed feature of our slang is the extensive use of the *-o* suffix. This is not entirely our own possession; the French have developed it extensively and the Americans also use it.⁵ Here are some of our many examples: *abo*, aboriginal; *afto*, *arvo* and *sarvo*, (this) afternoon; *beauto*, a variation of *beaut* as a term of approval; *cacto*, the insect cactoblastis; *chromo*, a harlot; *compo*, worker's compensation; *evo*, evening; *cappo*, a Capstan cigarette; *cobbo*, a friend or cobber; *commo*, a communist; *commono*, a clay marble; *cazzo*, a war casualty; *homo*, a homosexual; *whacko!* an enthusiastic ejaculation; *jollo*, a spree; *jello*, jealous; *lavo*, a lavatory; *lezo*, a lesbian; *metho*, a methylated spirits drinker; *jacko*, the kookaburra; *scrappo*, a fight; *susso*, unemployed sustenance; *pinko*, drunk; *rabbo*, a rabbit; *reffo*, an alien refugee from Europe; *reo*, a reinforcement; *spello*, a rest; *smoko*, a rest for a smoke; *sonno*, son, used as a form of address; *recco*, reconnaissance; *recepto*, a reception; *bullo*, nonsense or *bullsh*; *botto*, a bottle; *pendo*, an appendix; *galvo*, galvanised iron.

Goodo and *righto* are mainly Australian in use. The cry *sheepo!* hails from the woolshed. *Robbo*, a horse-drawn vehicle, was old slang from the days of cabbies. In addition there are numerous cases where the *-o* suffix is tacked on to place-names,

⁴ These suffixes are reflected in the following hypocoristic forms of Christian names: *Crissie*, Christopher, Christobel; *Bazzie*, Basil; *Flossie*, Florence; *Dezzie*, Desmond; *Ozzie*, Oswald; *Nessie*, Nesta.

⁵ Here are some examples from French slang: *apéro*, from *apéritif*; *aristo* (aristocrate), a swell or toff; *campo*, a holiday, relaxation; *dico*, from *dictionnaire*; *camaro*, from

camarade; *steno*, from *sténographe*; *prolo*, from *prolétaire*; *proprio* (from *propriétaire*), a landlord. Here are a few American examples: *cleo*, clemency (in the form of reducing a jail sentence); *dyno*, liquor; *gabbo*, a talkative person; *iso*, an isolation cell; *stoolo*, a police informer; *hobo*, a tramp; *bozo*, a man; *dollo*, a dollar; *dimmo*, a dime.

e.g. *Darlo*, Darlinghurst; *Flemo*, Flemington; *Kenso*, Kensington; *Robbo Park*, Rosebery Park; and on to other names, e.g. *Metho*, Methodist; *Sallo*, a Salvation Army worker; and Christian names, e.g. *Billo*, *Tommo*, *Jacko*, *Jimmo*, *Daiso*, *Maiso*, *Sallo*.

An excellent example of abbreviation combined with both the *-ie* and *-o* suffixes occurs in the Sydney newsboy's cry, *Pape! Papie! Papo!* which adumbrates some important features of Australian speech yet to come.

Another group of terms meriting attention possesses the suffix *-up*. It is common in English for *up* to be added in a verbal sense, thus *mess up*, *rust up*, *knock up*, and even for certain nounal forms to emerge; but this latter development has been more strongly fostered in colloquial speech in Australia than anywhere overseas. Thus we have a *box-up*, a confusion or muddle (originally of sheep mixed together); *bush-up*, a case in which a person is lost, especially in the bush; *booze-up*, *beer-up* and *drunk-up*, a drinking party; *eat-up*, a meal; *frigg-up* or *muck-up*, a confusion, a row or argument; *quean-up*, *lair-up* and *mokker-up*, a dressing-up; *bunk-up*, an assistance or helping hand, especially in mounting a horse or in succeeding in life; *rough-up*, *smack-up* and *stoush-up*, a fight; *ready-up*, a case in which illegal methods are used to influence the outcome of a decision or an action; *roll-up*, an attendance at a meeting; *slug-up*, the equivalent of the U.S. frame-up; *wake-up*, a person who is alert.

The verbal Australian uses of *roll up*, to attend a meeting (from 1861 or earlier), *bail up* and *stick up* might be added.

3.—THE ABORIGINAL INFLUENCE

In Chapter XVIII, section 5, it is pointed out that there must be more than coincidence in the fact that certain features of our speech are reflected in aboriginal dialects.

We have already seen that in direct fashion we have inherited a good deal from the native language. Words like *dingo*, *warrigal*, *myall*, *humpty*, *bingie*, *gunyah*, *billy*, *yabbie*, *boomerang*, *jumbuck*, *kangaroo*, *kookaburra*, *bomboora*, *billabong*, even perhaps *waddie* and *jackeroo*, have been taken from the aborigines. But we have been affected indirectly as well.

In the "Commonwealth Census Bulletin" of place-names (1933) we find there are more than 4700 aboriginal place-names, or about one-third of the total. These should give us some easily accessible idea of the nature of aboriginal words.

Now, the first thing we notice about them is that they are strange-sounding to English ears. We cannot recite names like Barjarg, Barnoolut, Beeac, Brewongle, Buckajo, Bulgobac, Coolongalook, Corindhap without being conscious that there is nothing in ordinary English speech remotely approaching them.

Then, if we analyse these names a little more, we find that they have certain characteristics. For instance, fully half of them end in a vowel, especially the *-ie*, *-o* and *-a* sound. Then we find that a multitude have final syllables in which *-ong*, *-ang* and *-ing* are featured; that *-ac* and *-ook* are also strongly represented in final syllables; that *-up* is a typical Westralian ending.

If, therefore, we were to formulate a theory as to how aboriginal terms might affect Austral English it would be concerned with certain terminations and harsh sounds (and it should always be remembered that the crude English pronunciation of native names would form the influence, not the true aboriginal version, since the majority of Australians have probably never heard an aboriginal speak).

This seems to be exactly what has taken place. The *-a* or *-ah* suffix in aboriginal—as in the place-names Ajana, Alawoona, Albacutya, Alleena, Allomera, Almurta, Alonnah—corresponds fairly closely with the common Australian lengthening of *-er* suffixes, which are discussed in greater detail in Chapter XVIII.

The *-ie* suffix—found in a multitude of aboriginal names such as Adambimby, Adjungbilly, Allambee, Amby, Anakie, Armatree, Baandee, Badgelly, Baladjie, Baree—is reflected in our predilection for Austral English terms such as *Aussie*, *Tassie*, *ringie*, *billy*, *bluey*, *bingey*, *cocky*.

The *-o* suffix—as in Ando, Anembo, Amyarro, Ardno, Arrino, Bargo, Barwo, Bombo, Bendigo, Bredbo, Brogo—is reflected in the popularity of a group of Austral English words which end identically.

The *-ac* and *-ong* suffixes—as in Aramac, Beenak, Coolac, Adelong, Banyenong, Binalong, Bogolong, Boorolong—together with the variations mentioned above, are reflected in terms like *plonk*, *cronk*, *ponk*, *stonker*, *tonk*, *borak*, *fossick*, *barrack*, *zack*, *nark*, *skerrick*, *jonnick*, *mendic*, and in that often-used vulgarity *f—k* popular with the Australian tough.

The *-up* suffix—as in Badgebup, Balbarrup, Balingup, Banjup, Barringhup, Barraghup (all in Westralia) and Benjeroop, Birchip, Corindhap, Corop (in Victoria)—is reflected in the nounal forms already mentioned.

This theory of aboriginal influence is no more than a side-issue on the development of Austral English as a whole. But the coincidence of closely identical factors even in small groups of terms is too strong to be ignored, especially since these coincidences are also reflected in certain features of our accent.

4.—SPECIAL FORMS OF SLANG

Rhyming Slang

Rhyming slang has had brief vogues in Australia and its greatest currency has, oddly enough, coincided with wars.

Sydney "Truth" of 7 January 1900 noted that "Cockney slang is quickly displacing the old push lingo in Sydney" and gave the following example of the imported material:

I 'ad a brown I'm afloat, a green Jacky Lancashire in me left 'andsky and tan daisy roots. When I meets the cheese and kisses and pratted off down the frog and toad, I tell you I was a bit orl right.

A writer in the "Bulletin" of 18 January 1902 provides the following examples:

Me mother's away, as I was swiftly-flowing up the field of wheat in the bread-and-jam, a heavenly plan with a big charming mottle of O-my-dear sticking out of his sky-rocket fancy-sashed the girl-abductor on his bundle-of-socks with it cos he wouldn't let him have a virgin-bride for nothing.

The other day as I was going up the street in a tram a man with a big bottle of beer sticking out of his pocket bashed the conductor over the head [i.e. think-box] with it [i.e. the bottle] because he wouldn't let him have a ride for nothing.

An interesting footnote is supplied by the "Bulletin" to this effort. It is a comment that rhyming slang was "twenty years old at least" in Australia, which would take us back to the 1880s. Its hold must have been small, however, for in the "Australian Slang Dictionary" of *circa* 1882, no mention is made of rhyming slang, although a glossary of back slang is given. Crowe vouches that as late as 1895 it had secured small hold.⁶

However, in 1898, a writer points out:

The Cockney rhyming slang is popular in Australia and the lion comiques and lydies of the variety stage are helping to make the hold stronger.

The following examples were added to show the type of rhyme

⁶ In the "Australian Magazine" of 1 November 1908, J. H. Garth noted that rhyming slang "broke out a couple of years ago".

used: *Arty Rolla*, a collar; *mince pies*, eyes; *cheese and kisses*, the missus; *Charlie Prescott*, waistcoat; *Joe Morgan*, street organ; *pot and pan*, old man; *tiddley-wink*, a drink; *lamb's fry*, tie; *lump o' lead*, bread; *plates o' meat*, feet.

These examples, or the greater percentage of them, anyway, are not Australian. In fact, it can be generally asserted that only a small number of rhyming slang examples are indigenous to this country. The expressions current round about the Boer War period and during World Wars No. 1 and 2, were largely imported, out-of-date Cockneyisms.

Rhyming slang has had a much smaller currency in Australia than is generally realized. Australians are inclined to resist its use if only for the facts that it is a dull, unimaginative type of slang, and that there is little of the sharp, business-like nature of other Australianisms about it. What little authentic rhyming slang there is in this part of the world, will usually be found in a disguised form.

Thus a Sydneysider uses *Hawkesbury Rivers* for shivers, but automatically cuts it back to *Hawkesburies*. A hotel becomes known in rhyming slang as a *rub-a-dub-dub*—by rhyme on "pub"—and is quickly chopped back to *rubberdy*, *rubbity* and *rubby*. Through a rhyme on "cash" money comes to be known as *Oscar Asche*, and then becomes *Oscar*.

In the same way a disguise is dropped over the great bulk of indigenous expressions that were originally rhyming slang. *Knock-me* denotes a billy, from the rhyme *knock-me-silly*; *poddy* is two-and-six, from *poddy calf*, as a rhyme on *half-a-caser*; *macker* is a pony from the rhyme *macaroni*; *maggies* denotes women's drawers, by clipping from Maggie Moores; *on one's pat* means alone, shortened from *on one's Pat Malone*; *fiddley* denotes £1, from *fiddley-did*, a rhyme on "quid"; *Robertson* means profit, by extraction from the name of the Melbourne firm of *Robertson and Moffatt*⁷; *do a Botany*, to run away, from a rhyme on Botany Bay; *Steele Rudds*, potatoes, from a rhyme on spuds; *Roy Sleuce*, a deuce or jack in cards, from a combination of *Roy Rene* and *Harry Van der Sluice* which are respectively the stage and proper names of the Australian comedian

⁷ A former Melbourne firm commemorated in rhyming slang is Lewis and Witty, used in the form *Lewis and Witties* to denote women's breasts (by rhyme on "tit-

ties"). The probable link between the Melbourne firm Buckley and Nunn and the expression *Buckley's chance* has already been mentioned.

nicknamed "Mo"; *don't be auntie!* meaning don't be silly! has travelled even farther—it has come by transference from the English rhyming slang *don't be Uncle Willie!*

Here are a few examples of undisguised rhyme that seem to be Australian: *lubra* and *gerbera*, a Yarborough (in the game of bridge); *Captain Cook*, a look; *it's a breeze*, it is easy; *brown joe*, to understand (by rhyme on "know"); *Roaring Horsetails*, the Aurora Australis; *Charlie Wheeler*, a girl or sheila; *Joe Blake*, a snake; *goanna*, a piano; *Joe Marks* and *Joan of Arcs*, sharks; *dead spotted ling*, a tautological way of saying *dead ring*, meaning exactly similar; *Riverina* and *dog's dinner*, a shilling (by rhyme on "deaner"); *to poke mullock*, to tease or jeer at (by rhyme on the Australianism *to poke borak*), also *to poke muck*; *Steak and Kidney*, the city of Sydney; *Smellburn*, the city of Melbourne; *post-and-rail*, a lie (by rhyme on "fairytale"); *Victor Trumper*, a cigarette butt (by rhyme on the Australianism *bumper*); *Warwick Farms*, the arms; *bullock's horn*, to pawn; *Noah's Ark*, a spoil-sport or nark; *Sydney Harbour*, a barber; *Mark Foy*, a boy; *Port Melbourne pier*, an ear⁸; *Ned Kelly*, the belly; *giddy goat*, a racecourse totalisator.

It is worth noting that in America an odd myth has developed about Australia's use of rhyming slang. America, or at least a section of the U.S. underworld, uses a good deal of rhyming slang and, for some reason or other unexplained, this is inevitably described as "Australian" in the United States.

Dr David W. Maurer, the leading authority on U.S. underworld argots, sent me a list of 352 rhyming slang examples which are classed as "Australian" in America.

"This list," he wrote, "has been thoroughly checked by criminals from various parts of the country and, while it is not complete, it is representative of criminal usage." He adds that this rhyming slang "is largely an institutional or semi-institutional argot, since it is mostly used in prisons. It is obscure and little known outside the underworld."

An analysis of Maurer's list showed, however, that less than 3 per cent of the terms were definitely Australian; 49 per cent

⁸ In his cartoon strip, "Bluey and Curley", in the Sydney "Mirror" of 14 October 1942, Gurney used the following rhyming slang sentences: "Struth, a bag of coke comes into th' Sydney Harbour for a dig in th'

grave, and finds th' pitch and toss has gone down th' field of wheat. Blimey, no Mark Foy is going to give me a dig in th' grave. Yer might take me Port Melbourne pier off."

were original Americanisms; 48 per cent had been imported from England; 88 per cent had never been recorded in Australia.

A large proportion of the American borrowings from Cockney are extremely old, many of them being recorded in "The Vulgar Tongue" (1857), by "Ducange Anglicus", and in J. C. Hotten's "Slang Dictionary" (1859).

Although small, the Australian element in the list was highly interesting. The nine definite examples are: *Captain Cook*, a look; *cockie's clip*, a dip; *Cobar shower*, a flower; *Hawkesbury Rivers*, shivers; *Kennedy rot*, a sot (a drunkard); *mad mick*, a pick; *Pat Malone*, alone; *mallee root*, a prostitute; *Sydney Harbour*, a barber.

While *cockie's clip*, *Cobar shower* and *Kennedy rot* are certainly Australian, they are not used in this country in the rhyming senses listed by Maurer, which reduces the strict Australian element in this U.S. argot still more.

Several other terms in the list seem to have an indirect link with Australia. For instance, *Botany Bay*, "in the hay", i.e. asleep; *New South*, mouth (this is a common abbreviation for N.S.W.); *cabbage hat*, a rat, i.e. informer; *cabbage-tree*, to flee; *Jack Shay*, to slay (used in Australia for a tin quart-pot); and, perhaps most significant of all, *Kelly Ned*, the head, which seems to be an inverted tribute to the memory of Australia's Ned Kelly.

Only thirty-eight of the 352 terms given by Maurer had been recorded in Australia, and of these twenty-three are Australian borrowings from England also found in America.

Back Slang and Gibberish

Although the "Australian Slang Dictionary" of the early 1880s included a short glossary of back slang—apparently with the object of showing that it had some currency in this country—remarkably little of this type of argot is known in Australia. Here are a few examples from the "Australian Slang Dictionary" to show what is meant by back slang: *dab*, bad; *delo nam-mow*, old woman; *delog*, gold; *helbat*, table; *nair*, rain; *occabot*, tobacco; *wedge*, Jew; *yad*, day. All these, however, are English importations.

The nearest we can approach to argot of this type is to be found in certain transpositions of vowels in a limited number of cases, among which the following are best known: *eilasha*, a girl, by transposition from *sheila*; *eeler-spee*, from *spieler* (*eeler-*

whack is also used, being more current in the form *whack the illy*, to act as a speiler); and *aster-bar*, from bastard.

Gibberish or, as it was once called in Queensland, *lotus language*, had some popularity among larrikin pushes round the turn of the century.

Some useful examples are given by a writer in the "Bulletin" of 25 May 1901. As can be seen below these are of varying type; they mainly survive today—where they survive at all—among children:

<p>Itsynay, oysbay, erethay omecay ethay eachertay; utpay emthay incesquay intha ourya ocketspay.</p>	<p>Nitsy, boys, here comes the teacher; put them quinces in your pocket.</p>
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<p>Gerriger worrigger. Gerriger ariger biriger origer liriger lariger.</p>	<p>Get work. Get a bit of light labour.</p>
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<p>Givesy mevesy thavesy bumpvesy- ervesy whevesy youvesy arevesy dovesy wivesy wesy.</p>	<p>Give me that bumper when you are done with it.</p>
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The same writer notes the following special alphabet used by the larrikin pushes: A, Bub, Cung, Dud, E, Fuf, Gug, Huh, I, Juh, Kuk, Lul, Mum, Nun, O, Pup, Quh, Rus, Sus, Tut, U, Vuv, Wuh, X (pronounced Ux), Yuh, Zuz. He says that a means adopted by the larrikins to talk without being understood by the uninitiated was to spell out words with this alphabet. Thus, "what" would be rendered *Wuh Huh A Tut*, and so on.

Here is an example of what was once known as *lotus language*, dating from 1901:

<p>Carpum rarpound harpeyarpere Tar- pom, tharpát arpold blopoke harpit marpee jarpust narpow arpand arpime gopoarping tarpoo garpive harpim arpay barpump.</p>	<p>Come round here Tom. That old bloke bit me just now and I'm go- ing to give him a bump.</p>
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This form of language is better known as gibberish or ziph in English and as *le javanais* or *la langue de Java* in French.

In his excellent study of French argots, "Le Langage Parisien", Sainéan points out that gibberish was popular among Metz children in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In Hungary a form of gibberish known as *Madárnyelv* or bird language is current among children. This is formed by the intrusion of a consonant—mainly the letter *v*—and a vowel after each syllable of the words being spoken. Nonsense-language in which words are given the sound of real words, but are really quite meaningless, is known in Hungary as *Halandzsa*.

Germany has a form of gibberish closely allied to the English. Grose says that in English-speaking countries gibberish is "a disguised language formed by inserting any consonant between each syllable". If the letter chosen is *g* it is called "the *g* gibberish", if *f* "the *f* gibberish" and so on. As we have seen in the above Australian examples, there is also gibberish in which syllables like *arp* or *vesy* are intruded. In German-speaking countries a gibberish where, say, the letter *b* is inserted after all syllables is known as *B Sprache*. Thus, *ich habe gestern Anna gesehen* becomes *ibich hababebe gebesteborn Abannaba gebesebeheben*. The *b* is interchangeable with other consonants. Another form of German gibberish is found in the changing of vowels in a sentence so that all become identical. Thus *Ei da sitzt 'ne Flieg' an der Wand* becomes *I di sitzt 'ni Flig' in dir Wind*.

An excellent example of highly confused gibberish as used in Australia was recorded by a writer in the "Bulletin" of 18 January 1902, and ran as follows:

Dojarnarithinsorear Borillyjayrul-
litaysithinorin, Poritinkayruatayreeter
K. dayrithintjayrusint knayrittysay-
fithinorow moritchjayritchchorutch
atithinjopithinkayabout Austroritty-
jorithinapletralian Slorithinkojithin-
ayrang, joridgayrudgchayrithinoring
borittysaykittyory thoritinayrithince
soritinchaysithinorimpitayrample
horittykositty jorugoritgsjaysayrot
orithinsaychithinoroff horithinsay-
dithinoris chayrittyjokittysayrest
iritinkay bittinorin B 4/5/01.

Dear Bulletin, Peter K [the nom-de-plume of a correspondent] doesn't know much about Australian slang, judging by the sample he got off his chest in B 4/5/01. [This comment refers to the example given earlier beginning: *Carpum rarpound . . .*]

Although he did not adduce any examples to prove his point Crowe stated in 1895 that back slang was "much used by street sellers and some larrikins as the channel of conveying their ideas". From the material available it seems likely that Crowe was misled by the Australian use of transpositions and gibberish.

The gibberish expression *milfist the balfastards!* was reported to have been in use among Australian airmen in Lae Valley, New Guinea, early in 1944. It signified a faulty manoeuvre or a miss. The origin was a gibberish story which reputedly ran:

Jumping into a trulfuck I went out
with my gulfang to shoot dulfucks.
After a while I saw some dulfucks.
I lifted my gulfang, which went bal-
fang! balfang! Alas, milfist the bal-
fastards!

Jumping into a truck I went out
with my gun to shoot ducks. After
a while I saw some ducks. I lifted
my gun, which went bang! bang!
Alas, missed the bastards!

Australian inventions of portmanteau words have not been numerous. The following may be listed as the best, although none of these is particularly notable; *presstitutes*, woman journalists; *piecartist*, a man who sells pies from a cart or stall; *tomboystrous*, describing the activities of high-spirited girls; *aggranoy* and *aggrovoke*, combinations of annoy, aggravate and provoke; *kangarooster*, a jocular name for a person, from kangaroo and rooster; *bossaroo*, a combination of boss and kangaroo; *squatteroo*, a combination of squatter and jackeroo; and the examples *thievocracy* and *squattocracy* which, however, are less portmanteau words than straightforward uses of the “-ocracy” suffix.

CHAPTER XVI

OVERSEA INFLUENCES

1.—ENGLISH DIALECT

THE English language has been sorely buffeted by the philological winds of these South Seas. William Churchill has no delusions on the matter in his "Beach-la-Mar". He writes:

The fact remains that the common speech of the Commonwealth of Australia represents the most brutal maltreatment which has ever been inflicted upon the language that is the mother tongue of the great English nations.

In terms of population and length of history Australia has made more alteration to the English language than America. When we compare U.S. and Australian slang today we are liable to feel overwhelmed by the sheer bulk of American inventions. We must remember that America has had twice as much history as Australia, that her population is twenty times greater, and that she sits nearer European and English influences than we do.

In spite of these things we have more than held our own in the development of new language. We can even show some pointers to the English.

Consider, for example, how close we ran the English in the use of *kodak*, to take a photograph, and of *slanguage*. The former was recorded in England in 1891; Australia was using it in 1895. The latter appeared in England in 1892; it was widely current in Australia five years later.

And then consider the following words, all of which we might suspect of being English, but which were first recorded in Australia:¹

¹I have culled these early Australian records from old books and commentaries on Australia. The

"Oxford Dictionary" has been used mainly for English dates of use.

	Australian Date	English Date
<i>billet</i> , a position, job	1854	1870
<i>buster</i> , a heavy fall	1854	1860
<i>caser</i> , a "dollar", worth about 5s.	1849	1859
<i>chance it</i> , to take a chance	1835	1933
<i>chance the ducks</i> , to take a chance	1858	1873
<i>chain gang</i> , a convict gang working in chains	1840	1858
<i>Down Under</i> , used to describe New Zealand and Australia	1900	1908
<i>ganging</i> , work as a gang	1849	1865
<i>go to the country</i> , to go to jail	1882	1927
<i>josh</i> (<i>josser</i>), an old depraved person	1882	1892
<i>paralytic</i> , drunk	1890	1910
<i>solitary</i> , a sentence of solitary imprisonment	1847	1852
<i>sugar</i> , money	1862	1877
<i>to talk through one's neck</i> , to talk nonsense	1891	1904
<i>yum yum</i> , an expression of approval or enjoyment	1883	1904

It is a principle of lexicography accepted by the "Oxford Dictionary" that textual quotations are sufficient evidence upon which to base the original currency of a word. The expressions above are only a few of those which, upon this basis, can be accepted as of Australian origin.

A similar position arises when we compare Austral English with Craigie's "Dictionary of American English".² Here are a few of the many examples in which words claimed by Craigie as American are found to have earlier textual records in this country:

	Australian Date	U.S. Date
<i>Australian</i> (adj.), pertaining to Australia	1814	1856
<i>boomer</i> (n.), something notable, impressive	1860	1887
<i>bullpuncher</i>	1872	1874
<i>brush</i> (n.), forest-covered country; bushland	1799	1881
<i>buck</i> (v.), of a horse	1848	1864
<i>buckjumper</i> (n.), a horse that bucks	1848	1878
<i>bush</i> (n.), forest-covered land	1803	1827
<i>bushranger</i>	1805	1830
<i>Chink</i> , a Chinaman	1879	1901
<i>coast</i> (<i>about</i>) (v.), to wander, walk about aimlessly	1878	1889
<i>dray</i> (n.), a wheeled waggon	1833	1836
<i>jumper</i> , a man's blouse or smock-like shirt	1852	1853

Many times throughout this book the origin of common Australianisms has been traced to English dialect. In some cases,

² This dictionary was published in sections. At the time these notes were made, little more than half of the work was available in Australia.

almost entirely through Australian influence, dialectal words have gone back into English colloquial speech. *Larrikin* and the verb *to barrack* are outstanding instances of this.

In English dialect *fossick* meant to ferret out; we applied it to gold-seeking. In Suffolk dialect *to cob* meant to take a liking to, to cotton to someone. It is almost certainly the origin of our *cobber*. *Fair dinkum* meant fair play in provincial dialect; we have hardly modified the term at all to make it one of our best-known colloquialisms.

It is more than likely that *wouser* was developed either from the dialectal *wissere*, a teacher, or from *wow*, a complaint, silly talk, which is related to *wawin'* and *wowin'*, crying or wailing, in English dialect. Perhaps the dialectal use of *wasser*, for anything extreme of its kind, is also involved.

Boof, a clumsy or stupid fellow, has given us *boofhead*, a a numskull or simpleton. *Smoodge* comes from the English *smudge* or *smoush*. *Bowyangs*³ is derived from the old dialectal *bow-yankees*.

Stoush is from the English *stashie*, an uproar; *skite* from Scottish *bletherskite* which, in America, became *blatherskite*; *bang*, an intensive, as in *whole bang lot*, from the Scottish *jimbang*; *bisom*, a recalcitrant child, from the Scottish *besom*; *jinker* from the Scottish *janker*; *jonnick* from the provincial *jannock*; *whinge* from Scottish and provincial dialects; *kelly*, a crow, from the Cumberland *kelp*; *snickle*, a girl, probably from *snicket*; *fummy*, a cat, from *fomard*; *smarmy*, falsely-polite, smooth-tongued, from *smawm*, to smear; *vack*, an old woman, from *vecke*; *sool* from the dialectal *sowl*; *poddy calf* from the provincial use of *poddy* meaning round and stout in the belly; *to peg*, to throw; *to smoke*, to discover; *skillion*, an outhouse or lean-to; *dow*, a pigeon; *to ding*, to throw away—from English dialectal terms used similarly.

In an article on "Australianisms and Their Origin" in "The Lone Hand" of 2 November 1908 a writer asserted: "Many of the words most intimately associated with bush-life have been transplanted from the vocabularies of English provincial dialects."

This process of absorption has now gone a long way past purely bush terms.

³ The Australian use of *towyangs* was recorded in 1898.

2.—THE COCKNEY INFLUENCE

In "Life and Progress in Australia" (1897) M. Davitt remarked that Australian slang was derived from that of England with idioms of colonial growth and some American terms thrown in. He could possibly have phrased his view more aptly if he had said that Australian slang was mainly an indigenous growth with numerous English terms and fewer Americanisms thrown in. In terms of percentages today the Australian uses, by preference, at least 60 per cent of his own slang, about 25 per cent English and not more than 15 per cent American. In some groups in this country the percentage is as high as 70 per cent Australian.

We must reject as quite inaccurate Partridge's (1933) estimate in "Slang Today and Yesterday" that the percentages may be given as 40 per cent native, 35 per cent Cockney and 25 per cent American, although even these figures are sufficient to show that we are not—as many Australians suspect—overwhelmed by Americanisms.

This absorption of oversea slang is to our benefit. The more we absorb the better.

I have already stressed that as soon as expressions are removed from their original surroundings and applied in new surroundings their meanings tend to change. This is what has happened in hundreds of cases of imported terms, as, for instance, in some of the dialectal expressions just mentioned. We can see how their applications have been broadened, how they have taken on new shades of meaning, how their sounds have been modified.

There are, of course, many foreign terms which we have accepted without apparent modification. But sometimes we find that these words acquire greater currency in Australia—are used, that is, among more varied classes of people and more continually—than they had in the country of their origin. *Bloke* and *cove* are cases in point.⁴

Many expressions applied to specific things do not lend themselves easily to modification—for example, *rhino*, money, *bob*, a shilling, *guts*, a greedy person, *boko*, the nose, *ponk*, a stink, *kick*, a pocket, *gob*, the mouth. These are out of English slang and we have absorbed them as naturally as we have the great

⁴ Wrote "The Brazier" (trench journal of the 16th Canadian Scottish Battalion) during World War No. 1: "What curious expressions

these Australians have. Fancy calling a man a *bloke* or a *cove* instead of saying *gink*, as a *guy* naturally would!"

bulk of standard English language. It was natural for this absorption to take place if only because a large proportion of immigrants to this country during the past 150 years came from England and had used Cockney and provincial slang all their lives. The convicts brought it, the adventurers brought it, people who came to the South Seas to start life over again brought it. If we scan the pages of the "Australian Slang Dictionary" (*circa* 1882) and the dictionaries of Lentzner and Crowe, the amount of purely Cockney or English material in them will immediately be obvious.

But as Australia has grown up, as the immigrants have ceased to be foreigners and have bred native families, so has that old slang begun to die out, to be replaced by material of indigenous type. Not all of it has gone, certainly, but why should we resent importations from England and America when we can put them to good use?

3.—AMERICAN INFLUENCE

If, in spite of the hundreds of thousands of people who came to this country from England, we have been able to create and preserve a vast vocabulary of our own, we need have no fear that we shall not be able to survive the tide of Americanisms. Environment and geography are primary factors that keep our Austral English individual.

As H. W. Dinning observed in "The Australian Scene" (1939) "to use American slang—that very lively and expressive medium—is not to become Americanized. . . . We all use that argot. . . . England uses American slang and England is in no danger of Americanization."

Let us remember this undoubted fact. The extent to which a country absorbs the language of another country is not governed by lexicographers or academicians. The instinct of the people themselves governs it. They accept what they like, they reject completely words which have no useful application or which do not appeal to them. We have used and survived English slang. We will do and are doing the same with American slang.

In "The Australian at Home" (1891) Edward Kinglake wrote:

It is surprising that the Australian has not more resemblance to the American. There is a decided analogy between the conditions under which a great part of the two nations live, and yet it is only in very slight and trivial points that we notice them to be like each other.

Similarity rather than identity of influences has often misled the Australian into a belief that he is becoming something not much better than an occupant of one of America's colonies. More than fifty years ago Frank Cowan⁵ wrote of "the Yankee-land beneath the Southern Cross" in a Walt Whitmanish saga of our merits and demerits; but we should not wilfully misinterpret his words. To be *like* the United States is not to *be* the United States, nor does it necessarily imply that we are no more than a pale carbon copy of the States.

Geographically our economic and cultural kinship lies with America rather than with England. We can resist it, just as New Zealand has struggled to resist a cultural kinship with Australia; but the dead-weight of cold fact cannot be wilfully ignored out of existence. War has helped to wake us up a little about these things, just as it has wakened New Caledonia to realization that although she is French, she has more in common with the Australian or American way of life than she has with that of the remote northern world of France.

Somewhat illogically, the Australian usually tends to give way to despair when he hears Americanisms used in Australian speech. "America gives us most of the slang we do not get from England," declares Brian Penton.⁶ "Much of the slang called Australian is really imported from the United States," complains the Sydney "Telegraph".⁷ "The American element in our slang is growing fast and outstripping the original Cockney element," laments the "Sydney Morning Herald".⁸

While these assertions are made glibly enough, no adequate evidence has ever been adduced to show that they are true.

Let us look back a little to the comment of I. L. Bird in her "Australia Felix: Impressions of Victoria" (1877):

There is a tendency to adopt words which are rather American than English in their use. Thus a coach is a *stage*; a pair of horses, a *span* or *team*; a light trap of any kind, a *buggy*; light impedimenta, *swag*; a waggon, a *dray*; a mounted policeman, a *trooper*.

At first sight we might feel that this assertion is true—because we happen to have a phobia on the point—but in terms of fact only one of the expressions listed is American—*span*, for a pair of horses.

⁵ "Australia: A Charcoal Sketch" (1886).

⁶ "Think—Or Be Damned" (1941).

⁷ 14 July 1936.

⁸ 25 July 1936.

We can go farther than this. Two of the best-known Americanisms we have adopted are *bushwhacker* and *squatter*. Yet we have changed their meaning and application entirely. They are no less Australianisms today than are hundreds of other imported terms to which we have given new senses.

Here is a list of words which the Sydney "Telegraph" of 14 July 1936 palmed off on the public as Americanisms current in Australia: *Beefy*, biff, bluff, boss, *break away*, *to chew the rag*, *to chip in*, *to fade away*, *to get it in the neck*, *to back and fill*, *to turn or be turned down*, *fake*, *creek*, *push* (a crowd), hitched (married), tough (luck), *for keeps*, *going strong*, *also ran*, *bookie*, *cove*, *dago*, *duds*, *groggy*, *king pin*, *monniker*, *pal*, a peach, *rattled*, *togs* and *yap*.

The words in italics are either originally English or originally Australian, as reference to Partridge's "Slang Dictionary" will show. It is garbled nonsense of this nature that has made the Australian lose confidence in himself.

It is refreshing, therefore, to come across a statement such as the following, which appeared in the Melbourne "Age" of 9 September 1942:

The all-in [Australian] imitators of Americanisms are still in a minority, despite the enormous influence of "the movies". We have "said a mouthful" when we say that the average Australian, like the average Englishman, does not necessarily adopt every 'cute and slick new word.

We should not allow ourselves to be humbugged by superficialities or by prejudices that have been popularized by the misinformed. If in various centres we find American Snack Bars, Wyoming Basements, a few fruitologists and fruiticians, Bootlegger Punch, Yankee Lemonade, Hollywood Sundae, Alabama Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, Illinois Road, Pasadena Street and Hollywood and Kentucky Picnic Grounds, there is no need for us to despair. If we spell harbour and labour without a *u*, programme without the final *me*, socks as sox, and even slip in an occasional thru instead of through, it does not imply that our language is going into a decline. Rather the reverse. It is being reinvigorated.

Take this matter of the *-or* suffix instead of *-our*. It is practically universal throughout Australian newspapers and journals. It is also universal in America, yet it is highly unlikely that we inherited it from America, for the simple reason that it has been current in Australia since the early 1850s when the two

continents were scarcely known to each other. The Melbourne "Age" has used it from the outset of publication in 1854.⁹

A greater cause for complaint than the appearance of *-or* in the bulk of our newspapers, instead of *-our*, is the fact that uniformity is lacking, that *-our* still battles along in competition with *-or* to the confusion of the Australian public.

There is no reason in the world, apart from ignorance and sickly prejudice, why uniformity should not be obtained in Australia, either in favour of *-or* or *-our*. Both are old English uses well vindicated by time. But to allow both forms to compete with each other in Australian schools,¹⁰ literature and newspapers is something so patently ridiculous that it would be impossible anywhere except in a young country.

In his "Sketches", written in 1758, Launcelot Temple wrote: "Our reformers in the art of spelling . . . at present . . . write Honor, Favor, Labor." That comment is sufficient proof that this *-or* suffix is not a modern fad imported from the United States. The spelling *program* instead of *programme* is another old English use, dating from the early seventeenth century and used by Scott and Carlyle among others. The "Oxford Dictionary" declares that *sox* is the "commercial spelling of the plural of sock" and quotes H. G. Wells's "Kipps" as the first example of it. *Thru* for *through* is an old English use that dates from the fourteenth century; the form *thro* was also widely used from the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Admittedly America has made use of these simpler forms of spelling, but they are not American "inventions". Let us lay phobias of this type away among the prejudices unworthy of us.

It was not until Australians found themselves hosts to tens of thousands of U.S. troops and airmen in 1942 that they began to realize how vast was the gulf between speech in this country and America. A good many of the vaunted stories of Australia's Americanization vanished into thin air when, to the amusement of our visitors, Australians found that the U.S. slang they had

⁹ The Editor of the "Age" wrote to me: "I should hesitate to ascribe this to American influence, not only because the continents were barely known to one another at that date but also because the *-or* spelling was commonly used in these words from Middle English onwards."

¹⁰ The "Sydney Morning Herald" of 22 August 1929 reported: "According to the Director of Education

(N.S.W.) the department's attitude on the matter of spelling is generally one of strict observance of English usage, although it recognises that certain American [*sic*] forms have established themselves. Hard and fast rules cannot be laid down. It sees little objection, for example, to the adoption of such forms as 'labor' and 'realise', but rejects such as 'program' and 'thru'."

adopted was mainly of an antique brand, that a good deal of it had been discarded long ago by Americans, and that it was often misapplied by Australians.

There had been apprehension as to what was going to happen to Australian speech; the bulk of public opinion favoured the view that it was about to be overwhelmed.

For several good reasons that did not happen. The first reason was that, although we are keenly willing to accept new terms from overseas—especially if they are colourful, vivid, apt—there is a barrier of public inertia that allows no more than a filtering of new terms to be absorbed, even over a fairly long time. The second reason was that we already had a useful vocabulary of our own with which we were familiar; we were not likely to sacrifice it merely for the sake of adopting neologisms from abroad. A third reason was that we found Americans anxious to learn our slang.

“There’s one thing that tricks us; that’s your slang,” said a U.S. soldier interviewed by the Sydney “Mirror” on 19 March 1942.

Wrote the “Telegraph” on 25 March 1942:

The Americans are picking up Australian slang. With careful emphasis they use at every opportunity *dinky di* and *fair dinkum*, and a couple of other terms less nice.

So we can see that this process of absorption works both ways. The presence of Americans in Australia has certainly left an impression on our language, but there has also been an influence in the other direction. It is as yet too early to decide the extent of these influences, but they will not be as great as the average Australian is tempted to believe.

The Australian-American Co-operation Movement, Melbourne, considered some knowledge of Australian slang so useful to American servicemen that, in a little booklet entitled “Welcome to Australia” (1942), they included a special section on “The Way We Talk”. Here are a few of the items: *argue the toss*, *bonzer*, *bosker*, *bot*, *cobber*, *cocky*, *dig*, *digger*, *dinkum oil*, *Enzedder*, *furphy*, *oscar*, *sarvo*, *pozzie*, *to shout*, *tucker*, and *wowser*. The booklet adds:

Don’t think Australians always mean what you mean when they use slang terms. An Australian may tell you a tough sergeant is a *fair cow*; it’s also a fair cow when the *babbling brook* (cook) makes a *crook* (bad) stew. By *graft* he doesn’t always mean bribery; he often means hard work.

The booklet also declared that Australians had been listening to Hollywood movies so long that "they will understand almost all your slang", which was a piece of conceited nonsense. Australians who saw and heard the U.S. talkie "Ball of Fire", built around the subject of American slang, found the great bulk of it foreign and bewildering—which is another point helping to prove that we are not an American colony after all.

War-historian C. E. W. Bean in the Sydney "Sunday Sun" of 21 June 1942 declared:

Australians and Americans are closer akin than any other Anglo-Saxon forces, with the possible exception of the remarkable affinity between the Australians and the Scottish.

We need no more expect Australians to become American than to become Scottish. Affinity does not imply loss of identity.

In "English Words and Their Background" (1923) G. H. McKnight points out some parallels and differences between American and Austral English:

If variation in the names of things appears within a country, it is to be expected that in the widely separated parts of the English-speaking world the same phenomenon should appear. . . . American *candy* is called in English *sweets*, in Australian and Anglo-Indian *lollies* or *sweets*. American *sheep-ranch* is Australian. *sheep-run*, English *sheep-walk*. American *up-country* and *farmer* are Australian *bush* and *bushman*. American *tramp* or *hobo* is Australian *sundowner*. American *alfalfa* is Australian *lucerne*. American *grub*, "something to eat", is Australian *tucker*, Anglo-Indian and South African *scoff*.

McKnight also points out an important fact in World War No. 1 that should be remembered in relation to the present war:

When the American soldier in France was brought into association with his Australian allies, he learned that Aussies' English often differed from his own. He learned *shickered* for drunk, *smoodging* for making love . . . and a number of synonyms for his own slang words, such as *bloke* for "guy", *skiting* for "four flushing", *nark* for "crab".

The differences between our two slangs are extraordinarily varied.¹¹ For instance, as already pointed out, *graft* to the American means illegal profit through political pull; in Aus-

¹¹ Wrote Gilbert Parker, "Round the Compass in Australia" (1888): "A few words of comparison here. A *pub* of Australia is a tavern or hotel in Canada; a *township* is a village; a *stock-rider* is a cowboy; a *humpy*

is a shanty; a *warrigal* or *brombie* [brumby] is a broncho or cayuse; a *sundowner* is a tramp; a *squatter* is a rancher; and so on through an abundant list."

tralia it means hard work, and a *grafter* is a hard worker. A *spieler* to Americans (we call him a *spruiker*) does the talking outside a sideshow to rally patronage; to Australians he is a crook or swinder. *Leary* means suspicious or inferior in the U.S.; we have changed the pronunciation to *lairy* and it means flashy, especially flashily dressed. A *goog* means a black eye in the U.S.; here it denotes an egg. We say *full as a goog* when we mean pie-eyed, plastered or tanked as Americans would put it. With Americans a *ringer* is a double; with us he is an expert. With Americans a *ringtail* is a grouchy person; with us he is a coward. We converted the U.S. *roustabout* to *rouseabout*. A *leatherneck* is a marine in the U.S.; in Australia he is a station handyman.

A *buddy* to Americans is a *cobber* to us; their *doughboy* is our *digger*; a person who has been *taken for a ride* in the U.S. is a *smear* to us; a *dame* to the Americans is a *sort* to us; a *blue-stocking* is a *wowser*; a *wow* or *hummer* is a *bonzer* or *big twist*; *honest injun* to Americans is our *dinkum*.

Jim Donald, one of the best exponents of Australian slang when he sets his mind to it, and a columnist in the Sydney "Mirror" and "Truth", considers that American slang is too verbose, not as business-like and to the point as Australian slang. In the "Truth" of 31 May 1942, he expressed disapproval that an American slang expert—hired by Hollywood—had used more than one hundred words to inform his "public" that, while selling "speculator" seats outside a stadium, he mistook two ordinary citizens for plainclothes policemen.

Says Donald:

An Australian *slangster* could give him fifty words and a beating:

"I'm dropping *briefs* at the fight and someone *drums* me there's two *Jacks* on me *hammer*.¹² I palm the *briefs* and *front* 'em and I'm a quick *jerry* they ain't *coppers*. When I *tail* 'em and *sight* 'em *buyin'* their *ducats* for the *brawl*, I know I'm *sweet*—*Jacks* never pay for anythin'."

Another example showing the economy of Australian slang over the American product was given by Norman Campbell in "Life Digest" of August 1938, who quoted the following comparative examples from the "New York Times":

Australian: A *bonzer sheila* and a *dinkum bloke* got *stoushed* by a *push* before the *Johns* *mooched* along. It was a *fair cow*.

¹² Clipped from *on my hammer and tack*, on my track: a typical Australian mutilation of rhyming slang.

American: A knock-out sketch of a hot baby and an ace-high sport got beat up by some tough eggs before the cops woke up. It was a dirty meal.

Literal translation: A fine girl and a nice boy were attacked by ruffians and severely beaten before the police arrived on the scene. The assault was an outrage.

The talking picture has helped to familiarize Australians with many American slang terms and colloquialisms. It is axiomatic that all slang tends to become universal in relation to its publicizing agents and no country has ever possessed a better publicizing agent than America in her film-producing Hollywood.

A good deal of American slang is highly serviceable. It is colourful, apt, business-like. But American talkies have had this deleterious effect: they have tended to encourage people, especially youngsters, in a forced and unnatural use of slang because they feel it is "tough" or witty. They have, moreover, popularized some appalling misuses of grammar and deliberate distortions of English that could not, on any count, be classed as serviceable, colourful or pungent.¹³

In 1929 the Australian Minister for Customs (Gullett) declared that a watch was being kept on American films to see whether the quality of English used in them was bad. But nothing more than a watch has been kept; not a single American film has been rejected on the count of its slovenly perversion and mutilation of grammar.

Wrote F. A. Napier in the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 18 June 1932:

The apparent unconcern of the [Film] Censor Board is to a large extent responsible for the deterioration of the Australian's general manner of speaking.

This question of mutilated grammar is something distinct from the use of slang, and the issues should not be confused. It matters not one whit that Australia should hear and absorb American slang: but it is a matter of fundamental importance that children should come to believe it not only permissible but meritorious to befoul every precept of grammar with slovenly distortions.

¹³ Father L. F. Murphy, of St Ignatius College, Sydney, was quoted by the "Herald" of 6 May 1929 as saying: "Much has been said against the sordid stories of silent drama, but we are now faced with the un-

pleasant accent and slangy phraseology of the talkies, which, unless we exercise great care, will seriously affect the young people's pronunciation and expression."

In this direction the American talkie is exerting the worst possible influence on Australian speech. We are not a highly-educated people. Our resistance to destructive influences of this nature is therefore much lower than English resistance.

On the matter of U.S. slang importations it is doubtful if we have more than 500 Americanisms in everyday currency in this country. If we include words that are employed only occasionally, we could not bring the total to more than 1000. This is much less than 15 per cent of our total slang and colloquial vocabulary.

Here, by way of example, is a group of Americanisms that has wide currency in Australia: scam, boloney, nerts, to gyp, blind tiger, poppycock, jane, lowdown, lay off, okay, pushover, says you, snappy piece of work, so's your old man, attaboy, cinch, crack down on, slick, to bellyache, corny, crackerjack, to high hat, jive, oh yeah, scanties, you ain't seen nothing yet, eyewash, bleachers, to sell a pup, dodger (a handbill), coke (from Coca-Cola), claypan, pash, to ballyhoo, and how, gone coon, suicide blonde, zoot suit, brash, stooge.

These are only three dozen expressions. Find ten times as many and you will still be a long way off the 500 mark. List thirty times as many and you will have then barely reached 1000.

4.—ALIEN ELEMENTS

Only in recent years, since catastrophe struck the peoples of Europe, have Australians as a whole had any wide contact with aliens. True, there were German pioneers in South Australia¹⁴; Italian plantation workers in Queensland; we once had a minor Chinese problem; we have absorbed a few Greeks and Albanians and Afghans; but, generally speaking, we have been ignorant of foreigners, and our distrust of them has been largely a measure of our ignorance.

The refugees from Europe who flocked to Australia and New Zealand in thousands between 1938 and 1940 have been with us for too short a time for their influence to become apparent in our language. It will certainly become apparent in course of time, just as it did in America, but for the moment these Europeans are too energetically striving to become authentic Australians for any marked impression to be made.

¹⁴ "Within South Australia there are districts where possibly as much German is spoken as English," writes

T. S. Dorsch in "Some Australians Take Stock" (1939).

As for the impression made by foreigners who have been with us for a greater length of time, we have little to tell. *Spieler*, *spruiker* and *spruik* (from *sprechen*), *cronk* (from *krank*), *shicer* and *shyster* (from *Scheisser*), *sane* (from *zehn*) and *swatser* (probably from *schwarzer*) seem to be our principal inheritances from Germany. *Clinah* may hail from the German adjective *kleine* used as a noun, or, as Partridge suggests, it may come from Yiddish.

Shick, *shicker* and *shickered* are almost certainly from the Hebrew *shikkur*; *cush* and *all cush* from Hebrew *kasher*. *Slinter* and *slanter* are probably from the Dutch *slenter*; *oont*, a camel, comes from Hindustani. Our phrase *another pair of sleeves* is a direct translation of the Italian *Questo è un altro paio di maniche*.

In "Digger Dialects" W. H. Downing gave us an interesting record of terms from French, Italian, Arabic, Persian, Russian, Hindustani and Papuan pidgin picked up by Australian soldiers during World War No. 1.¹⁵ The French adoptions will be dealt with subsequently; pidgin has already been referred to in detail in Chapter XIII, and mention has also been made of some Arabian borrowings. The majority of these expressions have left no impression upon Austral English,¹⁶ and merit no further mention here.

In an article which I wrote for "Le Courrier Australien" of 3 July 1942, I pointed out some important relationships between French and English speech in general and between French and Austral English in particular. This article is reproduced below:

Fermer son oreille et son cœur aux charmes et subtilités de l'argot, c'est fermer son âme à une compréhension profonde du progrès social des peuples. L'argot se forme tout naturellement au fur et à mesure que les langues vivantes évoluent. Une langue morte ne développe plus son vocabulaire d'argot, la vie s'est éteinte de sa langue.

Les mots sont une sorte de monnaie intellectuelle—monnaie avec laquelle nous achetons et vendons les idées, les opinions, les renseignements—et sans laquelle nous serions dépourvus et seuls dans un grand silence.

¹⁵ An interesting example with both French and German antecedents listed by Downing was *blue duck* for a rumour. It is a reflection from the French *canard* and the German *Ente* used similarly.

¹⁶ The survival in Australia of the obsolescent French term *mont-de-piété* for a pawnbroker's shop

may be regarded as an exception. The French usually call an official pawnshop a *crédit municipal*. In Sydney alone five pawnbrokers use *mont-de-piété* as a business title, most of them without the accents marked and one with the incorrect spelling *Monte de Piète*.

Rien ne réfléchit plus subtilement l'âme véritable d'un peuple que son argot. C'est une béquille qui nous aide à surmonter les obstacles linguistiques — un pinceau que nous employons pour peindre la toile des expressions d'une couleur individuelle.

Dans son "Langage Parisien au XIXe Siècle" (1920) M. Lazare Sainéan — autorité bien connue sur l'argot français — s'exprime ainsi: "C'est au peuple, et non pas aux snobs, qu'on est redevable des acquisitions linguistiques réelles, permanentes, définitives."

C'est une chose de "dévider le jars" habituellement, et une autre de se rendre compte de l'importance que l'argot ou le "slang" occupe dans nos vies.

Les quatre plus grands vocabulaires d'argot du monde sont ceux de l'Angleterre, de l'Amérique, de la France et de l'Australie. Quoiqu'il puisse paraître logique que les liens entre les argots anglais, américain et australien soient innombrables et variés, il n'est pas aussi évident qu'ils puissent posséder beaucoup de liens avec l'argot français. Mais si l'on se penche d'un peu plus près sur diverses expressions, on retrouve de nombreux exemples d'unions linguistiques entre les idiomes de la France et ceux de l'Angleterre.

Par exemple, en argot français on dit "allumé" pour ivre, en argot anglais-australien c'est *lit*, en français on "travaille comme un nègre", en anglais on *works like a nigger*, les Français disent "ça n'est pas de la petite bière", les Anglais disent *that's no small beer*; les Français "brûlent la chandelle par les deux bouts", les Anglais *burn the candle at both ends*; "un cadavre" en argot français, est un *dead-un* ou *a dead marine* en anglais; une moustache en "brosse à dents" est *a toothbrush*; "un sac d'os", un homme maigre, est appelé *a bag of bones*; "né fatigué", ce qu'on dit d'un embusqué, s'exprime en anglais par *born tired*; "huile de coude" est *elbow grease*; "mon œil" est *my eye!*; "et comment!" est identique à l'expression américaine *and how!*

Les Français disent "malade comme un cheval", mais les Anglais disent *sick as a dog*; "c'est toujours la même guitare" (ou "musique") est la version française de l'idiome anglais *to harp on the same string*; "être dans tous ses états" est trouvé en anglais comme *to be in a great state*.

Et, pour bonne mesure, ajoutons que "mener par le bout du nez", régenter (quelqu'un), devient en anglais *to lead by the nose*.

Certes l'influence française sur l'argot australien n'a pas été très considérable et ceci pour deux raisons faciles à comprendre: — la géographie et le nombre insignifiant de Français vivant en Australie — on peut cependant relever souvent une influence profonde quoiqu'assez indirecte.

Un des plus anciens mots australiens (connu depuis 1844) à antécédents français est *shivoo* ou *shivaroo*, une réunion de famille ou d'amis, qui vient de "chez vous".

Depuis presque 25 ans, l'Aussie a décrit le vin très ordinaire comme *plonk*. C'est une rime facile sur "vin blanc" ou le nom "blanc". *Plonk* était une des expressions apportées à l'Australie par les Diggers qui servirent en France, dans la dernière guerre.

Possédant un mépris confirmé pour la prétendue intangibilité de tout langage établi, les Diggers ont beaucoup mutilé certaines expressions françaises pendant leur séjour en France.

Le premier "dico" de l'argot utilisé par les soldats et publié après la

FREND BELONG MI

Yar VI.

1940-41



A Monthly Magazine in New Guinea Pidgin.

Edited and Printed by the Catholic Mission, Alexishafen
for the Native Catholics in New Guinea.

FREND BELONG MI

A monthly magazine published in pidgin-English for New Guinea natives since 1935. It contains crossword puzzles, simple problems, stories—all in pidgin.

guerre fut écrit par un Australien, W. H. Downing, "Digger Dialects" (1919). Dans cet ouvrage on trouve par exemple les expressions "diggeristes" telles que *vin blank*, ou *von blink*, pour vin blanc; *von-blinked*, ivre; *vin roush*, vin rouge; *napoo*, il n'y en a plus; *delloo*, de l'eau; *buckoo*, beaucoup; *tray beans*, très bien; *say-pah*, je ne sais pas; *mungy*, un repas, qui vient de "manger"; *gas-gong*, un garçon; *vent a tair*, (aller) ventre à terre; *sava?*, comment ça va?; *mazonk* et *madamoisonk*, mademoiselle; *coushay*, coucher; *cat-sow*, quatre sous; *party*, partir; etc.¹⁷

Pour la monnaie en francs, les Diggers ont créé les expressions *onks* et *bezooks*.

Aux Diggers nous sommes redevables aussi de l'expression *axlegrease* (littéralement, graisse d'un essieu) pour l'argent; c'est une version de l'argotisme français "graisse" pour la même chose. Les Diggers nous ont donné l'usage du mot *artist* (artiste) pour un homme ou un "type", et les expressions dérivées, *beer artist*, un ivrogne; *bilge artist* et *bull artist* un vantard, un moulin à paroles, etc.

Il semble aussi que l'usage argotique du mot *brigand*, signifiant, en australien aussi, un fourbe, un escroc, ou un fripon, nous a été légué du français.

En jargon anglais il y a le mot *loopy*, pour fêlé, ou louf, loufoque, louf-tingue, maboul, marteau, piqué, timbré, toctoc, toqué. C'est évidemment dérivé de l'expression française "loupé". De même, les Diggers ont pris les expressions "dingo" et "dingue" et, avec l'addition du mot anglais *batty*, en ont fait un argotisme australien, *dingbats*, qui a la signification sot, niais, idiot.

Il y a plus de soixante ans que l'expression *to barrack*, railler, taquiner, devint populaire en Australie. Beaucoup de discussions se sont élevées autour de l'origine de cette expression. Quelques étudiants de l'argot disent qu'elle vient du mot indigène *borak*, raillerie, qui paraît dans la phrase australienne *to poke borak at*, taquiner, mais il n'y a pas de preuve que *borak* soit un vrai mot indigène. C'est probablement du petit-nègre. Il semble que son origine véritable soit dans l'argotisme anglais "barrakin", qui vient du français "baragouin" (vieux français, "baracan").

Depuis un demi-siècle, les Australiens ont donné les noms *john* et *john hop* à un agent de police. Il est fort possible que l'origine ait été modifiée par "gendarme", surtout quand nous trouvons, dans "The Cautious Amorist" de l'Australien Norman Lindsay, la version *johndarmes*, qui est un bon exemple de l'alliance franco-australienne.

Il y a peu de jours j'ai relevé dans un journal de Sydney¹⁸ l'expression *femmes* pour "women" ou "girls". Dans un autre journal apparut l'expression *Tea Dansant* (sic).¹⁹

¹⁷During a visit to the French colony of New Caledonia in 1942 I noted many similar corruptions in use among the American and Australian garrison there, e.g. *par bonn*, pas bon; *com see com sar*, comme ci comme ça; *outan!*, attends!; *dupann*, du pain; *feenee*, fini; *mooshair*, monsieur; *tray bum*, très

bien; *mercy buttercup*, merci beaucoup.

¹⁸Sydney "Truth" uses this term frequently in its social notes.

¹⁹Generally speaking Australians are both ignorant of and disinterested in foreign languages. Perhaps because of the characteristic mutilation of pure vowels in Australian

La femme auteur australienne Miles Franklin emploie le nom *arrivism* dans son livre "All That Swagger", quand elle dit (p. 186), "Arrivism was his creed". Ce mot n'est pas anglais, mais une adaptation du français "arrivisme".

Les liens entre l'argot australien et la langue française sont donc plus profonds qu'on ne serait tenté de l'imaginer. Cette alliance des deux peuples qui se poursuit dans la langue vivace de l'argot australien, est un témoignage du souvenir toujours ému que le Digger garde pour la France.

speech (see Part IV), they have difficulty in learning Continental languages. I recall hearing (in March 1942) an Australian radio actor, playing the part of Albert in "Victoria Regina", call his royal spouse *Leibchen*, which means a corset or a bodice, when what he meant was the endearment *Liebchen*, sweet-

heart. In Sydney "Mirror" of 18 June 1942, appeared *Auf weidershen* when what was intended was *Auf Wiedersehen*. In Sydney "Truth" of 20 June 1943 a social writer perpetrated the ridiculous *femme chauffeur*; in the "Sunday Telegraph" of 2 February *au fait* was corrupted to *ofay*.

PART III

CHAPTER XVII

OUR IDIOM IN LITERATURE

1.—THE NEWSPRINT TRADITION

No review of Australian literature and culture could ignore the part played by the "Bulletin" in the development of a distinct national psyche.

The "Bulletin" was remarkable for something more than mere Australianism. It may be said to have formed a mould into which Australian creative talent was poured. It was a mouthpiece for the extraordinarily lusty desire of Australians at the close of last century to use words no matter for what purpose. Even more than this, it became a home-base for all those multitudinous snippets and trifles that form the true basis of Australiana.

From the outset of its career in 1880, the "Bulletin" was nationalistic in the keenest sense of that word. It began publication, it must be remembered, just a little over a century after the First Fleet arrived. Not until after 1850 did the Australian population exceed half a million. By 1880 the population stood at over 2,231,000. Into thirty years had been packed vast national growth.

Time and time again in this book I have turned to "Bulletin" quotations for enlightenment and example. This is neither a matter of accident nor one of caprice. The simple facts are that the material on bush lore, slang and idiom collected by thousands of writers in the "Bulletin" pages is absolutely irreplaceable. Perhaps never in the history of world journalism has a paper stood nearer to the heart of a country than the "Bulletin"; probably never again will so much of the true nature of a country be caught up in the pages of a single journal.

Of course, the quality of it is varied. A good deal of the "Bulletin" material looks as though it had been carved out of the Australian environment with a bush-hook and not a pen, but good or bad the great bulk of it provides a magnificent

glimpse of the Australia so few Australians appreciate. What in a few issues of the journal might appear trivial and unessential nonsense falls into its place over the period of half a century like a minute part of an immense jigsaw puzzle.

No other Australian journal—not even Sydney “Truth” which started its career ten years after the “Bulletin”—has used slang more readily, more accurately, more diversely. No other journal has attained such authenticity in its use of our idiom.

Says E. Morris Miller in “Australian Literature” (1940):

The Australianism of the “Bulletin” writers, led by J. F. Archibald, was a great effort to break away from its [i.e. England’s] restricting effects, and by this conception they stimulated a new sense of nationalism. . . . These writers created concepts from their own environment, so that “local colour” became more and more an accident of expression and ceased to be an end in itself, and they checked the tendency of migrants to transplant concepts typical of England into Australia.

This influence has been of immense service to Australian literature, as H. M. Green justly remarks in “An Outline of Australian Literature” (1930). It is impossible to dissociate from the “Bulletin” the names of writers like Henry Lawson, A. B. Paterson, John Farrell, Edward Dyson, W. H. Ogilvie, W. T. Goodge, Joseph Furphy, E. S. Sorenson, Steele Rudd, A. G. Stephens, Louis Stone, V. J. Daley, and Randolph Bedford. Without that journal some of these names might still have been great, but many would have remained in obscurity. The “Bulletin” found most of these writers, nurtured them, gave them a voice that they could find nowhere else, made many of them famous.

If there is one factor constant among all these writers it is that they are Australian, not only by an accident of environment, but by literary instinct. It was natural therefore that they and other writers of less note should agree wholeheartedly with the “Bulletin’s” enthusiasm for local idiom. Here, for example, is a collection of terms that appeared on the *Red Page* of 17 December 1898, proof that “Bulletin” writers were earnestly helping along the cause:

Horse-shoeing, “abuse, obscenity, profanity”; *a bit off*, something inferior; *offsider*, an associate, assistant; *working dead-horse*,¹ working to pay off a back debt; *dead bird*, a certainty;

¹ From an earlier English use of *work for a dead horse* or *pull a dead horse*, employed similarly.

waster, "a timber-getters' phrase for worthless logs or fitches, applied to men and things promiscuously"; *duck-shoving*, petty thieving; *nicking the peter*, stealing from tills in small shops; *get dead wet* and *go to market*, to become angry; *nark*, *Jonah*, *Noah's Ark*, an informer; *shiker*, drunk; *stoomey*, broke ("a *stoomer* or *stumer* is a man without money"); *mozzle*, "is luck, derived from *wurzschnozzle*", whence *good mozzle*, good luck, *kronk mozzle*, bad luck; *to throw deuces*, to get along well, succeed nicely; *throw sevens*, to have bad luck, to do badly; *throwing the seven* and *throwing his hand out*, to die; *skiter* and *fluter*, an incessant talker; *to pass the flute* (or *kip*), "to allow someone else to do a pitch", i.e. to talk, this being from two-up slang; *chyack* or *chi-ike*, to cheek; *sweet*, *roujig*, *not too stinkin'*, *ryebuck* and *good iron*, good or excellent, the thing desired; *dead motherless broke*, completely penniless; *as mean as Hungry Tyson*, exceptionally mean; *uni*, university; *rotter*, "an adept at learning anything"; *pat*, a Chinaman; *spieler* and *guy-a-whack*, a dishonest bookmaker or swindler; *gee*, a crook's confederate who "gees up the mugs"; *bludger* and *man-about-town*, a brothel bully; *battler*, a prostitute; *like a bandicoot on a burnt ridge*, lonely and forlorn; *like a possum up a gumtree*, "to express quickness or cleverness in doing anything".

These expressions are distinct from what are known as *Bulletinisms*, that is, coinages either by the "Bulletin" itself or by its correspondents. The latter have had little vogue outside the pages of that journal itself; the former belong to the general texture of Australian speech.

Aboriginalities and *aboliar* are examples of *Bulletinisms*. The first was the title given to a "Bulletin" feature on aboriginal and Australian subjects which first appeared on 21 April 1888. It continued a few years, was dropped, and returned again on 18 December 1897, since when it has been a regular feature. *Aboliar* was the nickname given to correspondents to this feature; the original form was *aboriginaliar* which first appeared in 1900. *Aboliar* came on the scene in 1906. Synonyms used by the "Bulletin" were *abo. writers* (1906), *aboites* (1909) and *abologists* (1914). *All abo-shine*, "all moonshine" was another invention that appeared in 1907, and *abo-lying* was used in 1908. These expressions, however, remained usable only within the pages of the journal itself.

In its early days the "Bulletin" gave a strong editorial lead in coining new expressions, many of which survived some decades before becoming obsolete. For example, *the Foorce*,

police in general (in recognition of the Irish element), 1883; *the Harmacy*, the Salvation Army, 1883; *Salv'-army*, used similarly, 1914; the *Rum*, *Shroud*, *D.T.*, *Evening Slime*, *Evenoose*, and *Granny*,² nicknames used in the 1880s for various Australian papers; *Cohentingenters*, Australian soldiers who fought in the Boer War (they were properly known as *Contingenters*, the *Cohen* being introduced by the "Bulletin" as a symbol of capitalism that forced the war), 1902-3; *anti-sosh*, anti-socialist, 1906; *secesh*, the secession movement by W.A., 1906; *the Ma Land*, England, 1907; *daily-paperese*, language or journalese used in daily papers, 1908; *Dryberra*, nickname given to Canberra, 1914; *the Blawstead Kawlinies*, mimicking the English attitude to Australia; *Afrikanderland*, South Africa; and, of recent vintage, *the Cronk News*, the London "News Chronicle", and *Madame Two Blues*, Mme Tabouis, the French political writer.

Partridge's statement that this journal coined *Maoriland* for New Zealand is incorrect. It was in use before the "Bulletin" existed. However, the paper was responsible for the abbreviation *M.L.*

It can be seen that the London "Times" was right when it wrote on 31 August 1903:

It is hard to over-estimate the extent to which this journal modifies the opinions—one might almost say the character—of its readers. . . . The "Bulletin" . . . is the nurse and the critic, sometimes severe, but sometimes friendly, of every young Australian who wants to write about the things he feels and sees.

Sydney "Truth", originally published in 1890, has always been a staunch exponent of colloquialism. Though it has a reputation for scurrility, it has had a considerable influence in popularizing Australianisms. From its earliest days it strove to represent the city in the way the "Bulletin" had represented the bush; it has therefore helped considerably to preserve indigenous slang. Practically all the several dozen nicknames for football teams listed in Chapter IX, for instance, are used regularly by "Truth".

²First applied to the "Sydney Morning Herald" in 1881; later to the Melbourne "Argus". The "Herald" is also referred to colloquially as *The Old Girl*, *Grandma* and *the Harlot of Hunter Street* (the Wellington, N.Z., use of *the Hag of Willis Street* for the "Evening Post" in that city may be noted). Other paper nicknames worthy of record—

they are not Bulletinisms—are *Ananias*, an 1883 name for the Melbourne "Age"; the *Bully*, *Crimson Wrap*, and *Bushman's Bible*, for the "Bulletin"; the *Digger's Bible*, "Smith's Weekly"; *Telly*, *Telewag* and *Furphygraph*, the Sydney "Telegraph"; the *West*, the "West Australian"; Perth; the *Tiser*, the Adelaide "Advertiser".

Here are a few cullings from the paper in its first year of publication, 1890: *boomer*, *bushie*, *overlander*, *yabber*, *pointing*, *dead birds*, *the Block*, *rouseabout*, *Griffo*, *Telewag*, *double-banking*, *guy-a-whack*, *cockie*, *stonewalling*, *to poke borax*, *back-blockers*, *to cut out*, *to box up*, *give someone Bondi*, *humping bluey*, *the Crimson Wrap*, *bluestone*, *heading 'em*, *toe-ragger* and *sool on*.

Early "Truth" inventions, which probably owed much to that giant of journalistic invective John Norton, included: *lag-land*, Australia, *pilly-winky-popp*, nonsense, humbug, *cliquocracy*, *Holy Joeism*, *Safrica*, South Africa, *professional flossiedom*, the world of harlots, *Domainiacs*, frequenters of Sydney Domain, and *larrikinesque*.

"Truth" has always devoted special attention to sporting news and, as a consequence, has developed racing jargon considerably. Bookmakers, for instance, are nearly always referred to as *bookie boys*, *bookie bhoys*, *bag boys*, *bag-swingers*, *tommies*, or the *leather-lung brigade*; the starting post is the *peg*, jockeys are *hoops*, an all-up bettor is an *all-upper*, a favourite is a *hot-pot*, a handicapper is a *weight-juggler*, crooked racing men are *rampologists*, starting-price bookmakers are *S.P. merchants*, an outsider is a *no-hoper*, *no-chancer*, or a *bolter*, a place is a *possie*, the close of a race (or the end of a game) is the *death-knock*, to defeat in a contest is *to stoush*, the racing world in general is *turfdom*, race-goers are *punterdom*, bookmakers are *bookiedom*, old-timers are *ziffsters*, a female bettor is a *puntress*.

Here is an example of the mixed metaphor in which "Truth" commonly indulges in its sporting gossip: "His defection was a life-saver for the bookie-boys, but Burberry took a lot of gilt off the gingerbread by coming with a wet sail and winning with his ears pricked." (From "Truth" of 13 February, 1944.)

In football news we find *Zam-buk*, an ambulance man; *(at) lemons*, the interval; *pigs*, football forwards; the *bag of wind* or the *puddin*, a football; *first* or *second stanza*, the first or second half of a game; and *Aussie rules*, Australian Rules football.

In social news, which "Truth" handles with engaging—and sometimes malevolent—flippancy, we find the Hotel Australia called *the Pub*, women are *femmes*, men are *hommes*, girls are *fillies*, and *tres* (without the grave accent) is an intensive.

And here are a few general slang terms found in "Truth" pages: *motza*, a large sum of money; *curl the mo*, to succeed brilliantly; *curl*, a successful bet; *dinnyhayser*, something outstanding; *get the drum*, to be "tipped off"; *square off*, an apology;

toey, *good* or *bad trot*, *con-girl*, *top-off*, *bottling* and, of course, *wouser*, which was mentioned several times in earlier chapters.

"Smith's Weekly" has also been a fairly consistent user of slang, especially in its sections devoted to Digger reminiscences. It has done little, however, to contribute to our store of Australianisms. The "Woman's Mirror", another weekly, also fosters the use of indigenous expressions, but its original contributions have been few.

2.—LITERARY INVENTIONS

It is only by a tedious process of checking that we are able to trace the word-inventions of individual authors. C. J. Dennis, the popular poet, was perhaps our most noted exponent of this form of individualism. Here are some of his best: *to float*, to die; *gospel cove*, a parson; *handies*, love-making by fondling hands; *hot socks*, bright-coloured hose; *give it lip*, to call out; *mopizootics* and *oozipootics*, names for a fictitious disease.

Most of these are nonce-words and have never emerged from a purely literary use.

Boldrewood gave us a number of examples in *alcoholizers*, *drunkards*; *to hit the white*, to succeed; *to scratch*, to travel fast. Hume Nisbet gave us *baked-head*, silly; *lushings*, much; *to have a shy for*, to search for; and *swippington*, a drunk. J. B. Stephens used *bossaroo* and *to pay with a hook*, to steal.

Norman Lindsay, who is an able exponent of Australianism, provides *belly-grunting*, a severe stomach ache; *flumdoodled*, baffled; *good eating*, attractive (used of a woman); *a gutsful of grunts*, describing a disagreeable person; *ratty*, in love with.

Miles Franklin coined *crackest*, the best, and *arrivism*. Xavier Herbert gave us *ruggerlugs*, for buggerlugs, and *Charley*, a Japanese.

Here are a few nonce-words used by varied authors: *hard-upedness*, *bungfoodled* (humbug), *jackeroesses*, by Henry Lawson; *cheeker*, a kiss, by J. A. Barry; *diddleums*, delirium tremens, and *myrnonger*,³ a contemptuous term for a person, by H. Kingsley; *slew*, to beat, outwit, by Charles R. Thatcher; *fit for woogooroo*, daft, by F. Cowan; *drowerman*, by J. Moses; *downed*, depressed, by E. Langley; *disant*, to remove ants (from one's person), by Charles Shaw; *squdgy*, soft, swampy, *weirdities*, things that are weird, *uncorroboree*, adj., not like a corroboree, *skinship*, the relationship of natives, by Ernestine Hill; *cowdom*

³ In the "Bulletin" of 6 May 1899 a writer referred to *mongers*, worthless persons, which may be linked

with this term. The etymology is obscure.

and *cowkind* (formed on mankind), by Frank Dalby Davison; *fly-by-nighting* and *verbotens* (things forbidden), by Brian Penton; *oysterlets* (little oysters), *degibber* (to remove stones from something), *bananaologist* (an expert on bananas), by S. W. Keough.

3.—USE OF IDIOM BY AUSTRALIAN WRITERS

If J. MacGregor, author of "Fifty Facts About Australasia" (1883), were alive today he would surely not repeat his airy generalization that "Australasia is the depository in the east of the language of Shakespeare and Milton". Nor would R. E. N. Twopeny, whose "Town Life in Australia" was also published in 1883, be able to tell us that most of our writers "draw their inspiration from English sources".

In short, during the passage of half a century, much has happened both to our language and to our literature. It is inevitable that these should be intimately woven together, for words and idiom are the bricks with which literature is built. The aptness of their use is largely a measure of the authenticity of a work, of its strength and colour, of the vitality that flows through its pages.

It is scarcely necessary to point out that the great bulk of our early literature, and most of New Zealand's literature up to the present time, failed to be recognizably Australian or New Zealand because the poets were singing in jaded accents imitative of Wordsworth and Tennyson and Shelley or because the writers were clutching desperately to foggy ideas about classic English prose. They felt outcasts and exiles in a foreign land. They were not accommodated to their environment.

But once they settled down to the feeling that there was something unique about Australia and Australians and set themselves to an earnest study of their environment a great change came over our literature. Even the most casual observer will note the Australian virility of numerous books published since the early 1930s.

Here is how Norman Bartlett⁴ sums up the present-day spirit:

In the best modern Australian literature there is an authentic note of self-examination, a realism inspired by a search for national understanding, a desire for things as they are. And it is written in a racy, easy Australian idiom.⁵

⁴ In the Sydney "Sunday Telegraph", 19 October 1941.

⁵ Eric Partridge, in "The World of Words" (1938), says: "Such Australian . . . writers as are bitten

with the nationalistic bug are almost as independent [in their use of the English language] as the most lawless Americans . . . because they exalt popular speech."

Astonishingly enough, this idea that environment and idiom have anything to do with literature seems foreign to many of our writers and would-be writers. Generally speaking, they seem to be under the impression that anyone with a fair vocabulary and a reasonable knowledge of grammatical rules can sit down and create literature. Anyone can write, but it is another matter altogether whether the product will have meaning or colour.

In a review of "The Fiction Fields of Australia" in the "Journal of Australasia" (1856) a writer declared:

The great mass of mankind can only hope to catch glimpses of the glory of "every common sight" when genius holds it up for them in the right light. This genius has not yet done for Australian nature. Most of us have had more than enough of positive Australian dialogue, but we have never read an Australian dialogue artistically reported. We have heard squatter and bullock-driver and digger talk, and we think it would be very uninteresting, no doubt; a verbatim report of the conversation of Brown, Jones and Robinson, in the old world, would be equally uninteresting, but we know by experience that genius can report it so as to be interesting—yet leave it the conversation of Brown, Jones and Robinson still. The first genius that performs similar service in Australia will dissipate our incredulity, as to this matter, for ever.

The writer was over-optimistic in his final mention of "for ever" because Marcus Clarke, Boldrewood, Henry Lawson, Steele Rudd, Sorenson, Louis Stone, Penton, Tennant and Herbert—among many others—have shown the Australian speaking in a way that is Australian, yet many are still unconvinced. The above writer adds:

We cannot point out how the great untouched Australian quarry is to be rightly worked. Only as we roam about the motley streets, or ride through the silent bush, we have just sense enough to feel that, when the capable eye comes to look upon them, all these rude amorphous materials may be arranged in form of the highest and most artistic beauty.

Remarkable words these, written almost a century ago. Just as that writer discovered Australia, felt its immensity and variety and strength, sensed its colours and shades, so must every Australian writer discover this country for himself. He can be helped along the pathway to that discovery, but the final revelation is one that only he can uncover.

If this book has any value at all, apart from a purely philological one, I hope it will serve to give Australian writers some fresh glimpse of the people who are this country and of the individual language they speak. But there is this point to

be remembered: words alone do not make literature, there must be some transmuting genius in a writer. He must exercise the greatest care in his choice and use of idiom. To overload a book or story with Australianisms merely for the sake of using them would be almost as fatal as to attempt to interpret Footscray in terms of London's West End.⁶

This book is an effort to tame Australian idiom, to sort it out, to classify it. It should help Australian writers considerably, if they use it with care, and resist the temptation to make their writings a conglomeration of Australianisms.

In the multitude of examples that follow, these points should be noted: (i) Every book or work mentioned has Australianisms in it. (ii) Generally speaking, the most successful of the works mentioned are those in which our idiom has been extensively used. (iii) Only in relatively recent works have writers set themselves to the task of drawing metaphor and simile out of the Australian environment. (iv) The most successful works are those in which the writer either has a personal knowledge of his subject and its locale or has devoted great study to it. (v) Hackneyed Australianisms like *dinkum*, *bonzer* and *cobber* are used sparingly. (vi) Historical novelists commit many anachronisms in their use of Australianisms.

Some familiar names or some familiar works will probably be missed in the following examples, but in order to provide a thorough cross-section of Australian literature it has been necessary to lay aside a multiplicity of examples that would cloud the scene and to draw upon some little-known works to show that, even though the writers themselves may not be aware of the fact, they are using Australianisms.

The examination is split into the following sections: (a) Commentaries on Australia. (b) Australian poetry. (c) Novels and Short Stories. (d) Drama.

It should be particularly noted that the Australianisms quoted are, without exception, only a few of those used by the various authors in the works examined. The meanings of most of the words have been given in early pages.

⁶ On 14 August 1936 the B.B.C. broadcast a programme on Australian slang and vernacular, prepared by an Australian, John Hood, who (according to the Sydney "Herald"

of 18 July 1936) pointed out "that while some Australian literature is of high standard the most successful writers express themselves in everyday [Australian] language".

Commentaries on Australia

Numerous quotations have already been made in this book from the works of Collins, Cunningham and other early writers. For the purposes of this section commentaries dating back only about eighty years have been selected.

1859, W. Kelly, "Life in Victoria". Largely a commentary on goldfield life. Here are some of the many Australianisms he uses: *diggerism, nobblers, to hang up a horse, duffer* (worthless mine), *limejuicer, mate* ("the fashionable colonial term," he calls it), *sticking up, cabbage-tree hats, bullock-punchers, stock-riders, squatter, horse-planting, Van Diemenian, to shout* (drinks), *colonial experience, tucker, Pivot City* (Geelong), *swag, fossicking, shepherding* (the mining use), *Joel, dart, old man* (kangaroo), *bugger-on-the-coals* and *bell-topper*.

1890, A. J. Vogan, "The Black Police". Mainly dealing with black trackers and outback life. *Humpy, Cousin Jack, hatter, brumby, Croweater, Bananaboy, Never Never, gibbers, yarraman* (a horse), *to prop, silver-tailed, copper-tailed, outside country, to talk bullock, dispersal* (of blacks), *Chinky, John Chinaman, cockatoos* ("settlers"), *stringybark* (strong liquor), *stock-whipping, rouseabout, overlander, duffers* (cattle thieves), *yabber, waddy*.

1893, K. Mackay, "Out Back". Deals extensively with the back-blocks. *Goanna* (for piano), *front country, to bogey, Land of Sin, Sweat and Sorrow, woolpack* (used to describe a white cumulus cloud), *poddies, Crimean shirts, pikers, barney, bush telegraph, stoush, my colonial!, dog-leg fence, game as a pebble, bush wire, sundowner, Prince Alberts, humping bluey, whalers, hard graft, swaggies, jumbucks, on the wallaby, bushed*. These examples reveal a development in the use of Australianisms—the introduction of colourful expressions as well as those of purely utilitarian environmental type.

1925-6, "The Australian Encyclopaedia". These examples show that, even in a work of purely reference type, the authors have found it advisable and even necessary to incorporate numerous Australianisms. *Negroheads, wattle, black tracker, Joes, the Braddon Blot, bushranger, bolters* (runaway convicts), *stickings up, nicker nuts, Canadian Exiles, gilgai country, outside country, tick fever, tick worry, green monday, double drummer, floury miller, first Fleeters, Emancipists, Exclusives, Exclusion-*

ists, blackfellow's bread, beaky, settler's twine, waler, willy willy, black north-easter, Meldrum school, Fremantle doctor, cock-eye bob, cheeses, pipes, depot shed, barb, kelpie, stump-jumping plough, Bawra, two-up, boxer, ringy, fair go, to butterfly, nob, grey and warrigal.

1940, Ernestine Hill, "The Great Australian Loneliness". Probably the best Australian travel book to date. *Cockeye storms, mia-shelter, a blow-in, fly-veil, (days) before the yeast bread* (old times), *to yandy* (to winnow), *soakage wells, to go pinkhi* (to disappear), *binghi-pads* (native tracks), *singabouts* (corroborees), *shypoo shops* (beer houses), *ringers* (stockmen), *over the ranges* (in the W.A. outback), *tuckerless, poddy-dodgers, piccaninny daylight* (dawn), *swamping* (travelling), *didgeree-du* (a native music pipe), *yacki* (celebration), *scaly* (crocodile), *skins* (native relationships), *bull-roarer, T.I.* (Thursday Island), *combo* (a white man who cohabits with an aboriginal female), *blowholes, the Trans* (transcontinental train), *floater* (a worthless opal), *Jimmy Howe* (for *Jacky Howe*, a type of shirt).

1940, B. O'Reilly, "Green Mountains". Mainly a commentary on life in the dense bush. *Poddy calves, tuckerbag, fair dinkum, billy, cooee, paddocked, cobbers, paddy melons, active and tough as a wallaroo, outback, stockwhip, boundary-rider, to double bank, springboard* (axemen's), *driving* (tree-felling), *wallaby jack* (used in tree-felling), *Digger, kooka, billabong, to go bush.*

1941, I. L. Idriess, "The Great Boomerang". Especially dealing with the remote inland and Never Never. *Centralian, gibber plains, Dead Heart, storms, to follow the storms, johnny cake, roo, the Corner, waterhole, (a face) gnarled like the crinkles in a mulga root, the Alice, Ghans, windsplitters and razorbacks* (lean cattle), *tabletops* (broad well-built cattle), *nuggety, Bedourie shower, a perishing track, the back door, lignum, brownie, back o' beyond, water bag, gunyah.* Idriess uses Australianisms liberally in his many books and knows the inland well.

1941, C. Barrett, "Coast of Adventure". Mainly concerned with the Northern Territory. *Topender, Wet, Dry, walkabout, Territorian, Japo-aboriginal, white-blackfellows, couta, sing a bone, flourbag* (white), *wogs, cheeky fellow, dillybag, dip* (a swim), *debil-debil country, skerrick, yabbering, crocs, sugar-bag, piccaninny daylight, know one's ekker, the Earlies, tuckertin, no more!, Top End, a shingle short, stumpy* (a stump-tailed lizard), *to growl* (the aboriginal method of making a violent scene).

Australian Poetry

Australian light poets have been scarcely less ready than prose writers to use Australianisms. The great, but now almost defunct, school of bush balladists, encouraged originally by the "Bulletin", took a delight in exploiting indigenous idiom, to an extent that eventually became wearisome. The "Bulletin" poets, however, were not the first to realize that Australianisms were permissible adjuncts to light lyrics and ballads. Charles R. Thatcher anticipated them in some highly popular jingles; a large school of pantomime writers also put Australian slang to excellent use.

1864, C. R. Thatcher, "Colonial Songster". A book of topical lyrics. *Shicer, fossicked ideas, mullock, John Chinaman, to blow, fly-blown, licence-hunting* (a gold-mining term), *to talk bullock* (i.e. to swear), *trap, dead nuts on, skiting, barney, miner's right, shepherding* (the mining use).

1886, F. Cowan, "Australia: A Charcoal Sketch". A poem in Walt Whitman style, reviewing Australia. *Never Never country, Australdom, buster, bunyip, settler's clock, as miserable as a bandicoot* ("a popular comparison of problematic truth and odious according to man and beast"), *kangaroodom, wurley, cornstalk, my word!, humped his drum, long sleever, Bishop Barker, deep sinker, dummy, jackaroo, cooeeing*.

1896, H. Lawson, "In the Days When the World was Wide" etc., and "While the Billy Boils". Collections of poems of varying length, mainly concerned with outback life. *Bankers* (flooded rivers), *riders* (sliprails), *spieler, chows, No Man's Land, T'other-siders, boss-of-the-board, crawler, rouser, sheep-oh, stoushing, Jimmy Woodser, the Never, to pink 'em, smoke-oh, bell-sheep, picker-up, donah, a derry on, to swag it, a down on, chew some-one's lug, Prince Alfreds, hard case, chyacking*.

1899, W. T. Goodge, "Hits, Skits and Jingles". Poems of a humorous type, concerned with both rural and city life. *Wood-and-water joey, kleiner* (clinah), *chuck a seven, guiver, nan-nan, whip the cat, strike the gutter, post and rails, she-oak* (beer), *leatherneck*.

1915, T. Skeyhill, "Soldier Songs from Anzac". War-time poems. *Possie, cobber, dinkum, Anzac, chocolate soldier, smoodging, willy willy* (a shell).

1916, C. J. Dennis, "The Moods of Ginger Mick". The Australian larrikin in wartime. *Peb, to play handies, stousted, snake-*

headed, strength of, drive a quill, joes (melancholy thoughts), shine (good), mopizootics, strike me up a wattle! In this, as in his other works, Dennis included some of his own inventions.

1918, N. Campbell and L. Nelson, "The Dinky-Di Soldier and Other Jingles". More soldier poems. *Dinky-di, squib, full up of, crook, yakker, shanghai, Noo South, put the acid on, bonzer, to smoodge, shicker, trey, sheila, bosker, dilly, back o' Bourke, cocky's joy, Darling pea.*

1938, J. Moses, "Nine Miles from Gundagai". Poems in the out-back tradition, written over an extended period. *Tuckerbox, deaner, jonnick, all wool and pure merino, to ply the acid, beefers (cattle for beef), strike me fat!, kooka, old stick (a person), hoppers, woollies, spruiker, tray, stone the crows!, dumped (by breakers), matilda, Bidgee, droverman.*

Novels and Short Stories

This field is naturally the most suitable for the exploitation of popular forms of speech. The works chosen for examination are therefore more numerous than in other sections. Once again some popular names will be missed, such as Lawson, A. H. Adams, Hornung, Steele Rudd, Sorenson, K. S. Prichard, G. Casey, E. Dark; but to include all these would be to overload what is probably already an overloaded section. For the same reason many of the well-known works by some of the authors included have been omitted, such as Penton's "Inheritors", Tennant's "Tiburion" and "Foveaux", Gunn's "Little Black Princess", Lindsay's "Redheap", "Saturdee" and "Pan in the Parlour". All these are rich in the use of Australianisms and I have annotated them all, but to include them here would be to obscure the main point at issue, which is that our best writers willingly use their own idiom, thereby adding immeasurably to the virility of their work.

Here are some twenty examples, which take as their subjects many avenues of Australian life and which, therefore, can be regarded as reasonably representative of the scene as a whole:

1867, Old Boomerang (J. R. Houlding), "Australian Capers". Light and semi-humorous stories of Australian life. "A policeman danced a *corroboree* in the roadway", *southerly burster*, (a person described as) "a regular old *bunyip*", *dillybag, to crack one's cobbera* (head), *old crawlers* (people), *cabbage-tree boys, shout.*

1874, Marcus Clarke, "For the Term of His Natural Life". A story of convict settlements in Tasmania and Norfolk Island, based largely on material collected by careful research and therefore ranking as the first novel interpretive of the Australian scene. *Ticket-of-leave, the Factory, bolter, the System, a down on, to oval* (a fetter), *tucker, damper, assignment system, colonial experience, blacktracker, bushranging, out station, Rum Hospital, canaries* (convict clothes), *cooees, billy, expiree, to cut out* (cattle), *stockwhip, the Ring* (Norfolk Island convict society), *old hands, convictism, first fleeters*. Several anachronisms occur in this book. They are dealt with separately in section 4.

1878, Ironbark (G. H. Gibson), "Southerly Busters". Stories of a light and inconsequential nature, mainly concerned with out-back life. *To whip the cat, jackeroo, sundowner, swagman, boundary-rider, trimmer* (something notable), *dust* (flour), *pad-docked, Murrumbidgee whaler, cockatoo, to tommyhawk* (gash a sheep when shearing), *daggers* (shears), *a blow* (with shears), *to rough 'em* (shear badly), *pickers up, tidal wave* ("a large glass of colonial beer").

1879, Mrs C. Cook, "Comic History of New South Wales". A strained and tedious effort at humour, rescued from complete oblivion by the fact that it catches a little of the authentic Australian spirit. *First fleeter, yabber, to shout, cooeeing, larrikin, bigger* (an aboriginal), *bird of passage, nobblerize, Our Harbour, Government woman, Vandemonian, forties, Government stroke, pure merinoes, lollies*.

1881, Rolf Boldrewood (T. A. Browne), "Robbery Under Arms". Story of Australian bushrangers and stock thieves, set in New South Wales; a careful study of both environment and idiom. The best as well as the most idiomatically authentic of all Boldrewood's works. *Sydneyside, bush telegraph, traps, stuck up, crawler* (a person), *to fit a person* (for a crime), *take to the bush, to turn out* (of a bushranger), *nobbler, black tracker, Government men, sent out* (from England), *duffing, clearskin, super, myall cattle, kangarooing, my word!, mickey* (a young bull running wild), *dart, hard dinkum, Currency, gibbers, bullocking, give best, squatter, yabber, ringer, swag, brush flier, to prop, to cut out, billet, head station, knock-about men, brumby, dogleg fence, to barney, cockatoo, "a big steamer . . . tearing up the bay like a hundred bunyips", darkey* (an aboriginal), *cattle racket, logs* (prison), *wood-an'-water joey, fossick about, gunyah, diggings, barneying, Joe, bail up, boxed up, perisher* (a spree),

jerran, pebble (a game horse), "treacherous as a dingo", *never never country, scrubber*.

1885, "The Australasian Printers' Keepsake". A collection of essays, sketches and verse, which reveals the Australian short story in its infancy. *To give best, old identity, bullocky men, boomer, old man kangaroo, smoke-oh, Gumsucker, sundowner, fossicking, a set on, to white it out, backblocks, to bottom, shicer, go bung, to stick up, a down on, grass* (casual news hands), *tucker, nobblerize, to shout, wallaby track, full up of, colonial Robert, spieler, as miserable as a bandicoot, to poke borak, overlander, bullock puncher, limejuice, to roll up, Cornstalk, Crimean shirt, to point, Sydneysider, forty, barracking, new chum, chyacking, grass-list*.

1901, "The Bulletin Story Book". A collection of short stories written over the preceding twenty years, and containing works by Lawson, Steele Rudd (A. H. Davis), E. Favenc, A. B. Paterson, R. Quinn and E. S. Sorenson among many others. *Sliprails, "like a wallaby with the dogs in full pursuit", outside* (inland), *whitefellow, blackbirding, mulga, whaler, bluey, township, yous, kangaroo dog, to do the block, sundowner, dead bird, bloody-minded, gumdigger, pakeha, to duffer out, game as a pebble, hump one's swag, to shot* (to shoot), *larrikinness, Sydney Rock* (synecdoche for a rock oyster), *M.L., goburra* (kookaburra), *jack, Maoriland, hatter, telegraphs, tuckerbag, go-ashore, a bushy, to bandicoot, rouseabouting*.

1903, Tom Collins, "Such is Life". One of the few Australian classics; droll tales of outback life laced with genial philosophy. *Frames and carrion* (bullocks), *ropeable, fly-blowed* (penniless), *flog the cat, chiacking, pleuro, wool-rag* (a tarpaulin used to cover a wool dray), *Wagga pot* (a bullock bell), *prince alberts, off the shears* (used of sheep recently shorn), *narangies* (young men learning station life), *tucker-money, mana* (authority, prestige, from Maori), *boundary man* (boundary rider), *duff* (to steal grass), *tank-sinker, toe-rag* (term of contempt), *red-gummers* (men who steal red-gum), *Wilcannia shower* (a dust storm), "the gutter of life" (an allusion to a gold-bearing gutter), "to eat the damper of idleness".

1906, Edward Dyson, "Fact'ry 'And's". The first book devoted to the Australian larrikin and his female associate, built up from a series of short stories, most of which were first published in the "Bulletin". *Boshter, toms* (girls), *the pure glassey, pigs to you!, spieler, rouseabout* (in a printer's office), *tizzy, grafter,*

fair dinkum, righto, to pole on, barracking, to buck at (object to), *lurk, yacker, ryebuck, gazob, my troubles!, Jo-Jo, just the lolly, shicker, bonzer, chow, dilly, try the acid on, bottle-oh, to give brusher, to toss in the agate* (to give up), *get the jerk or hunt* (to be fired). The increasingly distinct motif in this type of slang from that given in earlier examples will be noted.

1907, Mrs A. Gunn, "We of the Never Never". A story of life in the Northern Territory. *Up country, "billabonging in true bushwhacker style", the Wet, the Dry, go bush, Territorian, out bush, The Land of Plenty of Time, to run a banker, Overland Telegraph, bluey, nuggety, johnny cake, bullock-punching, within cooee, humpy, to spell, nigger* (an aboriginal), *waterhole, cheeky fellow, to give best, on one's Pat Malone, chyacking, bangtailing, staggering bobs, a bushy, puff de looneys, walk-about, boundary-riding, paper yabber, brumby, willy willy, to whip the cat.*

1911, L. Stone, "Jonah". A full-length novel of city larrikin life, the only work of its kind yet written. *A derry on, nugget* (a girl), *two-up, ryebuck, johns, to sool on, to stoush, poke borak, to perform, dart, rouse on, chyack, skiting, tray, shickered, donah, go crook on, kip, boxer, spinner, fair go!, a trot, spieler, full as a tick, how do you like your eggs done?* (The approved answer to this is "Scrambled like your brains!")

1919, V. Marshall, "The World of the Living Dead". An inside story of jail life; simply but vividly told, with a liberal sprinkling of underworld slang. *Toe-ragger, the Bay, Kathleen Mavourneen, to drum up, strong of, urger, flapper pirate, cow* (a person), *half a jim* (10s.), *push-up men, break men, donkey-dipper, a dead rough up, household barber, dwelling dancer, nob spinner, a hum* (borrower), *sixer* (six months' jail), *sleep* (three months' jail), *zack* (six years' jail), *put the acid on, ragtimer, cobber.*

1928, K. S. Prichard, "Coonardoo". A story of outback life in Westralia, with particular reference to aborigines. *Proto-Australian, pink-eye* (festivity), *pink-eye-ing, rough as bags, (eyes) namma holes in viscid orbits . . . , (moon) "a slim gilt kylie in the sky," gin shepherd* (a man who lives with a gin or lubra), *silvertail, camel-punching, black velvet* (aboriginal women in general), *bingee ache* (stomach ache), *wongied* (talked), *double-donkey* (to ride two on a horse), *double-banked, fair crack of the whip* (a fair go), (clouds) "dingy and dirty as greasy wool", *crabholes, hardest doers.*

1930, L. W. Lower, "Here's Luck". A humorous novel, probably

the best of its kind yet written in Australia. *A session* (argument), "I would much rather rear a *platypus* than a boy", (girls) "gazing with bright *lizard eyes* at our table", *cow*, *dinkum oil*, *tipslingers*, *urgers*, *whisperers*, *put the fangs in*, (champagne) "thrilled and uplifted me *like the fangs of a bull-ant*", "What are riches to the man who has just been stung by a *bull-ant*?" *dingo* (a term of contempt), *fair dinkum*, *Bungidoo* (to go to bed), *bushed* (in a city), *cobber*, *a doer*, *two-up*, *to dong*, *stone the crows!*, *well in*, *to feel crook*, *nobbler*, *eggboiler*, *shivoo*, *sheila*, *a lime soda* (something simple, certain).

1934, N. Lindsay, "The Cautious Amorist". Story of four Australians wrecked on a Pacific island, a typically light-hearted product of the facile Lindsay pen. *Booze-ups*, *bellygrunting*, *a down on*, *full as a tick*, *johndarmes*, *to run the rabbit*, *good eating* (of a woman), *dithered* (drunk), *tucker*, *do one's block*, *the beat of* (better of), *slim-dilly*, *fair go*, *gutsful of grunts*, *flumdoodled*, *to give best*, *cock-eared*.

1934, B. Penton, "Landtakers". A vivid historical novel, which reveals painstaking effort on the author's part to interpret both the Australian scene and our idiom. The first book of a promised trilogy, the second of which is "Inheritors", another excellent piece of work. *Bullock dray*, *cabbage-tree hat*, *assigned*, *old hand*, *stockwhip*, *free settler*, *ticket-of-leave*, *new chum*, *lime-juicer*, *never never*, *jumbucks*, *cove* (a station manager), *canary birds*, *tape* (a cat-o'-nine-tails), *lobster* (a guard), "enough bits of me scattered round the store to feed a hungry *dingo*", *tucker*, *humpy*, *dingo-fires*, *the System*, *gibber*, *to sool*, *rouseabout*, *Holy Joe*, *billy*, *to tail* (follow), *drunk as a bastard*, *escapees*, *hatter*, *blackfeller*, (teeth) "like the relics of a burnt-out scrub", *stiffen the crows*, *stockyard*, *pick the eyes out*, *myalls*, *woolshed*, *bull-roarer*, *scrubbers*, *nulla-nulla*, *tuckerbags*, *mad like a cut snake*, *grafting*, *post and rails*, *sliprails*, *buckjumpers*, *cobber*, *monkeys*, *skite*, *hard case*, *pleuro*, *bullocky*, *swagmen*, *cleanskins*, *boundary-rider*, *on the wallaby*, *off one's pannikin*, *to waltz matilda*, *backblocks*, *t'otherside*, *deaner*, *spieling*, "as fat as a *poddy calf*".

1936, D. Stevens, "The Tramp and Other Stories". A selection of short stories from Australian life, concerned mainly with a psychological interpretation of character, with environment consequently pushed into the back of the picture. *Swaggies*, *cockies*, *basher gang*, *to cut out* (to complete), *paddocks*, *creek*, *sheep-run*, *put the dirt into*, *johns*. This book is notable because the author used *bloody*, *bastard*, *bitch* and the exclamation *Christ!*

probably more frequently than any other Australian author had done to date in a single volume.

1936, M. Franklin, "All That Swagger". Another historical novel, in which the author has called lavishly upon Australian idiom. *Brickfielder, ticket-of-leaver, first families, outback, waterhole, stuck up, rouseabout, walers, to prop, pure merino, bullocky, bailed up, banker, shicer, expirees, binghi, sandy blight, good iron, the talent, new chum, squattages, dummyming, fossickers, waddy, chow, miner's right, squattocracy, brumby, scrubber, boomer, full up of, hard case, Mother State, dingo (a person), fly veil, within cooee.*

1938, X. Herbert, "Capricornia". A novel of the Northern Territory, with special reference to the aboriginal problem. *The Dry, the Wet, booze artists, black velvet, combo, comboing, cockeye bob, no more!, yellor-feller (half-caste), pommy, hooray, to dong, go bush, binghi, bing, bludgers, on one's pat, just quietly, crook (ill), jinker, "fleeing like bandicoots before a bushfire", silly as a cut snake, jakerloo, on one's bone, dingo hungry, dinkum oil, to roust, bonzerest, tuckertin, jonnop, shicker, wonks, blowbag, wouser, blackbirding, hoot (money), shyster, hoon, walkabout, tracker-boy, jumbuck, bullsh, booze-hound, Wagga rugs, put the mocks on, keep sweet with, whingeing, get off one's bike, sheila, scone-hot.* This excellent novel indulges in a number of euphemisms for vulgar terms which tend to become annoying to the reader, such as *blunny* and *burry* for bloody, *ruggerlugs* for buggerlugs, *sweet but-all* for sweet bugger all, and *futt, flopping* and *spit*. (K. S. Prichard's use of *boggers* for buggers and *boggerin'* in "Working Bullocks" is of similar irritating type.)

1941, K. Tennant, "The Battlers". A tale of tramps and dead-beats and containing much of their vernacular. The author has a keen ear for slang and is at pains to use it accurately. *Wheat cocky, to top off, billycan, dole-chaser, track-card, sundowner, bagman, bludging, lare (lair), an inspector of roads (tramp), ratbag, cockying, yabbing, bugger, dingo (a person), boangs, plonk, sheila, put the hard word on, ampster, illywacker, wack the illy, a beer-up, mad as a snake, hooray (good-bye), walk-about, zack, bludge on, happy as Larry, hatter (a lone tramp), warby, warbiest, a good sort, cherry cocky, Buckley's chance, facers, sandy blight, metho, to stoush, on compo, possie (a job), dead-copper (an informer).*

1942, E. Langley, "The Pea Pickers". A novel of two girls

who associate with hop-pickers and pea-pickers. *Hatter*, *pape*, *to the double dink*, *eucalyptian*, "like the bite of a *goanna* it was incurable and ran for years", *swaggie*, *yous*, "screaming like wounded *brumbies*", *Kelly country*, "he attached himself to us like a *tick* to a well-woolled sheep before shearing time", "cigarettes (so large) a *wombat* could have crawled into them", *the Woolloomooloo spit*, "like the best *Onkaparinga*", *cuppa*, *to keep yow*, (cockatoos) "like flying *aborigines*", *Maorilander*, (a hill) "covered with grass like the hide of a *kangaroo*", *boomerang-shaped* (leaves), *stinger* (an exceptionally hot day), "*aboriginal* with shadow" (i.e. dark or sombre), *cow-cockying*, *spruiker*, *to bandicoot*, *hurro!* (good-bye), *pufaloonies*, *pigrooting*, "leapt back like a startled *brumby*". The author has shown pleasant imagery in her development of indigenous simile and metaphor—to a greater degree, indeed, than any other Australian writer has done within the covers of a single book.

Drama

The field of Australian drama is not as yet sufficiently developed for a wide choice of full-length plays to be available for annotation. The following five examples, however, should serve to prove that it is as impossible for a writer for radio or theatre to avoid Australianism, when his subject is Australia and the people in it, as it is for practitioners of prose and poetry.

Edmund Barclay, "As Ye Sow". A historical saga, of popular type, written for the Australian radio. The first fourteen episodes only are reviewed here; these touch the period between 1788 and 1854. *Mob*, *Pinchgut*, *blackfellows*, *crawler*, *bush*, *Hawkesbury duck*, *bail up*, *cabbage-tree hat*, *stockwhip*, *sliprails*, *to lob* (arrive), *emancipists*, *first fleeter*, *selection*, *squatters*, *woolshed*, *bushranger*, *lurk*, *dart*, *not a skerrick*, *bullocky*, *yabber*, *to double bank* (on a horse), *the inside* (outback), *hooroo!* (good-bye), *Government men*, *Sydneysiders*, *colour*, *new chums*. Barclay commits a large number of anachronisms in this drama—more, indeed, than in any other work noted in this entire chapter (see section 4).

Douglas Stewart, "Ned Kelly". A play, mostly in verse, dealing with the activities and final destruction of the Kelly Gang, 1879-80. *Stuck up*, *bail up*, *traps*, *do one's block*, *Kelly country*, "where you (i.e. people) crawl about like *flies on the hide of a bullock*", *cow* (a person), *cobber*, *righto*, *troopers*, *blacktracker*, *township*, *duffing*, *too right*, *whingeing*, *so long*, *swaggie*, *ratbag*, *hard doer*,

fair dinkum, hatter, scrubber, cut the rough!, sheila, haven't Buckley's, to keep nit, up a gum-tree (in a quandary), *a willy willy of words, till it rains in Marble Bar* (i.e. for ever), *yabbies, to sleep with Mrs Green* (to camp in the open). A number of anachronisms also occur in this work.

Alexander Turner, "Conglomerate". Drama of an outback mining town. *Tuckerbox, johns, chloro, wowser, a blow in, goodo, bonzer, a beer-up, righto, knocked rotten*.

Betty Roland, "The Touch of Silk". One of the most notable of Australian plays; it has been produced in London, Russia and Australia. *Righto, dinkum Aussie, grafter, waterhole, a down on, not too wonderful*.

G. L. Dann, "Fountains Beyond". A play on the aboriginal problem; much of it is written in pidgin, although this pidgin is not of an enterprising type. *Billycan, cow, to job* (hit), *sweet, gunyah, fair dinkum, blackfeller, abo, tucker, to camp* (sleep), *larrikin, humpy*. Pidgin uses include *en't* for ain't, *that feller, plenty feller, frighten feller, alonga, go walkem about, jump-up longa me, diggem, puttem, grabbem, pullem*, and numerous other examples in which the suffix "-em" is added to a verb.

4.—ANACHRONISMS

Anachronism in words is the erroneous attribution of a term to a date before it was in existence. In isolated instances it is not a serious literary crime, but when perpetrated in bulk it needs correction.

Australian historical novelists and dramatists have revealed themselves particularly susceptible to this type of lapse. One good reason is that they have probably never considered the matter. Another is that, even if they were conscious of the possibility of anachronism, they have had no reference work—apart from Morris's sketchy effort—to put them on the right track.

Barclay's radio play, "As Ye Sow", already referred to, is an outstanding example of anachronism at its worst. His saga begins in 1788 and almost every Australianism used by him, to the period when his play stands at about 1860, is an anachronism. For instance, he uses *bush* in 1790; it did not become current until after 1800. In 1788, he uses *chewing the fat*, which is an English slang expression dating from the 1880s. He uses *crawler* as a contemptuous term for a person in 1788; but it was not in use until fifty years later.

Here are a few more of Barclay's lapses with the correct (ap-

proximate) date of use in brackets: *mob*, used in a 1788 scene (1810), *Pinchgut*, 1788 (1800), *blackfellow*, 1788 (1823), *Hawkesbury duck*, 1792 (1820), *bail up!* 1807 (1840), *stockwhip*, 1815 (1845), *sliprails*, 1815 (1826), *to lob*, arrive, 1815 (1880), *squatter*, in the modern sense, 1824 (1840), *woolshed*, 1828 (1850), *bullocky*, 1828 (1880), *to double bank*, 1828 (1890).

Marcus Clarke made similar errors in "For the Term of His Natural Life", some of his lapses being: *tucker*, 1834 (1850), *blacktracker*, 1838 (1867), *southerly buster*, 1838 (1846), *billy*, 1839 (1857).

Brian Penton also fell into many anachronisms in "Land-takers", among his chronological misuses being *tucker*, *sheila*, *never never*, *jumbuck*, *rouseabout*, *Holy Joe*, *billy*, *escapees*, *drunk as a bastard*, *offsider* and *so long!* (all in 1843, although some of them did not come into use until as much as half a century later), *stiffen the crows!*, *grafting*, *cobber*, *boundary-rider*, *waltz matilda* and *spieling* (all before 1863).

Although she preserves such old terms as *Indians* for aborigines in her historical novel, "My Love Must Wait" (1941), Ernestine Hill uses many anachronisms. Among them are: *bush*, 1792 (1803), *nuggety*, 1793 (1896), *offsider*, 1793 (1911), *white-anted*, 1794 (1920), *bucking*, 1794 (1848), *blackfellow*, 1795 (1823), *chain-gang*, 1795 (1840), *southerly buster*, 1796 (1846), *roll-up* (n.), 1801 (1861), *squib*, a cowardly person, 1801 (1918), *old men kangaroos*, 1802 (1826), *walkabout*, 1802 (1900), *waddy*, 1803 (1811).

Miles Franklin, in "All That Swagger", commits similar errors with *outback*, *rouseabout*, *to jump* (someone's rights), *bullocky*, *good iron* and *hard case*, among many others, all long before Australia had heard of them.

In Douglas Stewart's verse-play "Ned Kelly" (1943), *cobber*, *cow* (applied to a person), *do one's block*, *whingeing*, *ratbag*, *haven't Buckley's*, *to keep nit*, are among a number of expressions used anachronistically.

As already stated, this type of lapse is not a serious literary crime, but it should be resisted. To correct it may entail more careful research on the part of a historical writer; but he is obliged to engage in such research, anyway, so there is no reason why he should not do it thoroughly.

PART IV

CHAPTER XVIII

THE AUSTRALIAN ACCENT

1.—DISCOVERERS

MORE nonsense has been written about the Australian accent than about any other feature of our language. For three-quarters of a century and more we have been afflicted with the drivellings of people who have had opinions to air on the matter, either to damn Australians or to defend them—people who tell us that we have a twang or a drawl, that we talk through our noses, that we are Cockney or that we aren't Cockney, that we speak clearly, that we are not as bad as we are painted. Amazingly enough, in spite of all that has been said and written, no large-scale effort has yet been made to tackle the Australian accent from a scientific angle.

The discussion of whether the Australian accent is good or bad is irrelevant unless an intimate analysis is made of the nature of that accent and of how it came into being. To scratch on the surface of analysis merely serves to add to the pile of nonsense already weighing down the public with prejudices about their speech.

The best conclusion we can draw from this lay and pseudo-academic rubbish—and it will be examined in detail in succeeding pages—is that Australians have, in fact, developed an individual way of speaking.

In the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 7 December 1938 it was reported that Herman Black, lecturer in economics at Sydney University, had suggested that an inquiry into Australian pronunciation be instituted by the Federal Government. As this inquiry has never been conducted—though it is certainly well worth the expenditure of a few thousand pounds—there is not in existence any volume of carefully collated scientific material upon which we can base conclusions.

Since the Australian has been convicted and damned times without number purely on suspicion—such as that of the fancied

resemblance between Australian and Cockney diphthongs—he is obviously entitled to a rehearing. We suspect him of possessing an accent, but suspicion is not enough if we want to know what that accent is.

The exact period when Australian characteristics of pronunciation began to be apparent will probably never be established. Some of these characteristics were certainly well ingrained by the 1890s, since we possess some reasonably detailed notes from that time; but they had probably been in existence for several decades.

In 1826, P. Cunningham wrote in "Two Years in N.S.W.": "The London mode of pronunciation has been duly ingrafted on the colloquial dialect of our Currency youths."¹ He was not, however, explicit on the nature of this Australian "colloquial dialect". He may have meant no more than indigenous slang.

Almost half a century later we find J. A. Froude commenting on the purity of Australian speech.² "In thought and manners, as in speech and pronunciation, they are pure English and nothing else," he says.

On the other hand, Boldrewood observes in "Robbery Under Arms" (1881) that "most of the natives [i.e. native-born Australian whites] have a sort of slow sleepy way of talking". In "A Bride from the Bush" (1890), E. W. Hornung refers to "a lingo that declined to let the vowels run alone, but trotted them out in ill-matched couples". This is presumably a reference to the distortion of diphthongs.

Much earlier than both of the above quotations, R. H. Horne had remarked on "the colonial twang in the speech" in his "Australian Facts and Prospects" (1859). This loose generalization found commemoration thirty-five years later (13 January 1894) in the "Bulletin" in a poem entitled "The Austrilian Songstress" which concluded with the lines,

'Twere better if thou never sang
Than voiced it in Australian twang.

These were some, but by no means all of the indications that Australian speech was acquiring features of its own. The observations above are too general to give us any accurate knowledge of those features, but we sense in them some differentiation from the "pure English" of which Froude had written.

¹ Cunningham also refers to persons from London and its vicinity who had "thus stamped the language

of the rising generation with their unenviable peculiarity".

² "Oceania" (1873).

2.—COCKNEY—FOR AND AGAINST

That there was a considerable Cockney taint in early Australian speech we can have no doubt. We have already seen how London slang and cant was delivered to this country by the convicts and their caretakers; it would be illogical to expect that the accent of London slums and prisons should have been left behind. Until 1830 Australia's population numbered only 70,000; these people were mainly established in well-defined groups, at Sydney, Hobart, Port Phillip, etc. Imported English accents would therefore tend to be preserved, or to be absorbed by the strongest of these accents, the Cockney.

That tendency was apparently not only preserved but reinforced by new immigrants. For instance, in "Our Antipodes" (1852), G. C. Mundy alludes to "Sydney Cockneys", and in "Gold Regions of Australia", published in the same year, S. Mossman speaks of "the Cockney drawl of the hucksters, selling fish and fruit [which] sounds so refreshing on the ear—so thoroughly English".

It is interesting to note that between the time when gold was discovered in Australia and the early 1890s practically nothing, apart from a few trivial comments, was written about Australian methods of speech. These forty years had seen the population grow from 500,000 to more than 3,000,000, they had seen the establishment of city life and of home life, the growth of families that were not only Australians but the sons and daughters of Australians, and, as we have seen early in this book, the establishment of an indigenous idiom. They had been years of vast development and activity during which little except the material had been allowed to intrude: homes to be built, land to be tamed, money to be made. There was little time for reflection.

The 1890s brought the first period of soul-searching in Australia. No fewer than five dictionaries of Australian slang and colloquialisms were published or were in process of compilation between 1890 and 1900. The "Bulletin" was at work, spurring on men like Lawson, Paterson, Bedford, Davis, Goodge, Dyson. The Australian short story and bush ballad were coming into their own. Federation was in the air. Australians were pausing to think a little about themselves and their cultural future.

It was natural that thought should be spared for our way of speaking.

In "The Australian at Home" (1891) Edward Kinglake wrote

of some bush children: "They all had the colonial accent which is almost identical with the Cockney twang."

Wrote the "Bulletin" in a leader headed "Twang" on 6 January 1893:

Chief Justice Madden has dared to attend a girls' school Speech Day and tell the angels that their speech is disfigured by a "colonial twang". He besought them to pronounce the English vowels as they are intended and to keep their little noses out of the matter as much as possible. Whereupon the [Melbourne] "Argus" started a solemn enquiry into the why and wherefore of twang in this country and came to the conclusion that it is begotten of mental and physical laziness. Ghastly nonsense is lavished upon the subject of "colonial twang". Practically, there is no difference between the dialect of the London loafer, who leans against a wall and spits, and the pronunciation of the southern larrikin, who does ditto. But in this country the nasal loafer is more generally in evidence, his voice is more heard, and his accent infests the land instead of being localised. The early English convicts, mostly from London, brought it with them. Early Australian parents were too busy, and generally too uneducated, to notice that their offspring had caught the complaint, and said "kike" for "cake" and "gripes" for "grapes". In England the desire to imitate the twang is knocked out of the children at boarding school. . . . If the thing is to be eradicated [in Australia] the reformers must start upon State schools at once, for every year brings its thousands of recruits to the twang brigade. At present there is no effort made to raise the standard of State school accent, nor are the masters in general aware that it is a terrible thing to hear the youngsters reading. They read nearly as nasally themselves. The twang is everywhere—in Victoria, at any rate—ringing in one's ears. If it remains on familiar terms with society for a few years longer, it will become the accepted pronunciation of the country and pass as "good form". But whether the "colonial twang" dies out of Australian mouths or grows and strengthens and is improved, on the American system, the fact will remain that it was never at the beginning anything better than the twang of Cockney vulgarity. We imported it, long before rabbits, sparrows, snails, and other British nuisances were grafted upon our budding civilisation.

This commentary contains some important points, which will be dealt with subsequently. The most relevant matter to be noted here is that it plumps strongly for the Cockney theory, although the sole example adduced is the conversion of the diphthong [er] to [ar]. This conversion, plus the conversion of the diphthong [au] into a triphthong, has been accepted by many hasty observers as sufficient evidence to prove that our accent is Cockney from first to last. Kinglake (1891), quoted above, flourished these two examples as support for his indictment.

G. L. James wrote in "Shall I Try Australia?" (1892):

As to the English spoken in Australia, I believe it has already been remarked how correct, as a rule, it is, and I think it is free from any distinguishing

accent or provincialism to a marvellous extent, while the tone of voice is pleasing and well modulated. In Sydney, however, more particularly the young girls, especially of the lower classes, are apt to affect a twang in pronouncing the letter *a* as if it were *i*, or rather *ai* diphthong.

Here is a reasonably fair statement.³ One diphthong does not make a dialect, nor does it convict us of using a foreign dialect.

Since no observer has yet been able to produce more than a few superficial resemblances between the Australian and the Cockney accent, the allegation that Australians talk like Cockneys must be regarded as little more than one of the unfortunately popular myths to which we, as a young nation, are susceptible.

Probably the best words ever spoken on behalf of the anti-Cockney theory were by Thomas Wood in "Cobbers" (1934):

Australians don't [talk Cockney]. People who say they do know nothing of accents and nothing of voices. They judge by vowels and inexpertly then. They disregard intonation, inflexion and quality. Are the Cockney and the Australian voice alike in these? They are not. The first is husky and the second is thin. The first flicks up and down; the second stays level. The first slides its words into groups; the second draws them, one at a time. You do not find the Cockney stresses in Australia, nor, incidentally, the wit. . . . Australian vowels . . . reminded me of vowels I heard in the South Midlands rather than those I had heard in East London; they are the malformations you can make for yourself if you keep your tongue flat and tighten your lips. Ugly? That is a question of taste. But ugly or not, these vowels, like the characteristic intonation that goes with them, show how our tongue has developed in a particular country, and a condemnation based simply on prejudice is not justified.

Hector W. Dinning is another writer who takes up the cudgels on behalf of the anti-Cockney theory. His extensive observations on our accent in "The Australian Scene" (1939) make interesting reading.

In "Australia Limited" (1942), A. J. Marshall writes:

The only product besides wool that Australia has anything like a corner in is her inimitable accent and nobody is likely to want to take that off our hands. . . . A lot has been written about the Australian accent, but one thing only has been agreed upon. That is, that of all the accents evolved by British-speaking man, it is along with that of the Cockney, by far the most unpleasant. . . . Americans and Englishmen say briefly that "Australians talk like Cockneys". A sensitive ear will tell you that there are noteworthy differences. . . . There is nothing unnatural about the Australian accent. It is a legitimate, local variation of speech. The trouble is that it is so damnably unpleasant.

³ A writer in the "Bulletin" of 3 September 1892 noted: "Even tolerably well-educated Australians in pronouncing words containing the

long *a* vowel [i.e. [eɪ]] fall into a branch of Cockney twang, as for instance, pronouncing lady as though it were spelt *lydy*."

To conclude these quotations, here is a view expressed by J. Foster Fraser in "Australia, The Making of a Nation" (1910) which adopts the middle path:

To charge a person with talking like a Cockney has behind it an intention to be supercilious and rude. . . . To say that all Australians talk Cockney is just one of those exaggerations which the mass of people have a right to repudiate. . . . Yet that Cockney is spoken is undoubted. . . . To say that it is an inheritance from London settlers is absurd. My own belief is that it is an independent growth, partly due to climate, but mainly due to carelessness in speech.

By now it will have become distressingly apparent how many and how varied are the views held on the Australian accent—and it will also be apparent that no material evidence has been adduced to prove the case either for or against Cockney. Unfortunately the confusion does not end here. As Dr A. G. Mitchell points out in his paper on "The Pronunciation of English in Australia",⁴ the theories as to the cause of the Australian accent are hopelessly conflicting. These theories, which will be examined subsequently, contain quite a number of elements of truth, but they all dismally fail to be convincing for the good reason that they are not supported by material phonetic facts.

Unless we are prepared to go to the labour of taking the Australian mode of pronunciation apart, to examine what has happened to our vowels, we shall scarcely be entitled to accept the existence of an Australian accent, let alone to postulate theories as to how it came into being.

It is obviously not enough for us to say with Kathleen E. C. Graves in an examination of Australian character⁵: "Even the Australian voice is now distinct—its nasal twang and flat vowels are part of this pervading laxity [of the Australian character]" unless we can prove by example that the Australian does, in fact, nasalize and flatten (whatever that means) his vowels. There are plenty of writers and publicity-seeking commentators who will tell you that our vowels are nasalized. We have, for instance, already noted the "Bulletin's" referencè in 1893 to "the nasal loafer". It was commented on by the "Sydney Morning Herald" in a leader on 19 June 1926. The A.B.C. Federal Talks Controller (B. H. Molesworth) criticized the Australian "flat nasal inton-

⁴ Read before the Australian English Association on 1 April 1940; subsequently printed.

⁵ "Australians—A Distinct Race?"

an essay which won second prize in the short essay section of the 150th anniversary literary competitions (1938); published in the "Digest of World Reading".

ation" in the Sydney "Telegraph" of 28 March 1940. But we have been given no examples and have been offered no explanations for it.

To understand these facts properly a study should be made of Fig. II, which not only shows some of the organs of speech but shows the highest points reached by the tongue in producing what are known as the eight cardinal vowels [i], [e], [ɛ], [a] (at the front), [u], [o], [ɔ] and [ɑ] (at the back). In this figure we note also the position of the hard and soft palates in the mouth.

In Fig. I (below) we see not only these vowels, but other highly important vowels, set out in the form of a diagram which, it will be seen, corresponds roughly with the diagram drawn on the tongue in Fig. II:

POSITION OF TONGUE (Lips)	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
HIGH (Close)	i I		u U
MID-HIGH (Half-close)	e		o
MID-LOW (Half-open)		ɛ ɜ ə	ʌ
LOW (open)	↑	æ a	ɔ ɑ

FIG. I.—A table of vowels as used in Educated Southern English. The arrows indicate certain Australian tendencies towards raising the low or open vowels. (Adapted from Daniel Jones, "The Pronunciation of English".)

3.—OUR SPEECH EXAMINED

This section presents a detailed analysis of both consonants and vowels as used in Australia. For the sake of comparison the Educated Southern English pronunciation, which is accepted by Daniel Jones, A. Lloyd James and other eminent phoneticians as a standard or norm of English speech, is also adopted here in that role, although Australians know practically nothing of such Southern English pronunciation—probably least of all those who listen to the attempts of Australian radio announcers to ape it.

As this is the first thorough examination ever made of the Australian accent, some detailed evidence of a scientific nature,

possibly uninteresting to the general reading public, will have to be studied. I would suggest that these people temporarily skip this section and examine my findings on our accent in section 4 entitled Deductions.

For the sake of elucidation it would be well to point out here that vowels are classified according to the part of the tongue that is raised during their formation. When we talk about the front of the tongue we do not mean the tip; we mean the part of the tongue opposite the hard palate. The back of the tongue is that portion opposite the soft palate. Front vowels are formed by raising the front of the tongue towards the hard palate; back vowels are formed by raising the back of the tongue. Mixed or central vowels are produced when the highest part of the tongue is between the front and the back.

Values of Phonetic Symbols

i as in bead	ə as in first and third
ɪ " " bit	vowels of
ɛ " " dead	banana
æ " " man	eɪ " " bay
ɑ " " pa	aɪ " " my
ɔ " " caught	aʊ " " now
ɒ " " not	ɔɪ " " boy
o as sometimes in the	ɛə " " where
first syllable	j " " yes
of molest,	ŋ " " sing
obey	θ " " think
oʊ as in low	ð " " then
ʊ " " book	ʃ " " she
u " " boot	ʒ " " measure
ʌ " " bun	tʃ " " church
ɜ " " bird	dʒ " " judge

Fig. I should be kept in mind in reading the following comments on Australian vowel uses, especially as these vowels are treated in the order adopted by Daniel Jones in "The Pronunciation of English" (1927). This book is obtainable and could be kept at hand for comparative purposes. I have adopted what is known as the "narrow" form of the international phonetic alphabet, whereas Jones uses the "broad" form. In each case in which the symbols differ I have given an explanatory note.

Occasional references are made to New Zealand vowel uses as recorded by Arnold Wall in "New Zealand English" (1938).

(a) Vowels

To avoid unnecessary confusion I do not include mutilations of one vowel in phonetic renderings of another vowel under discussion, unless these are of a compensatory nature. The word *very* [vɛrɪ], for instance, contains modification of both the [ɛ] and the [ɪ] in Australian speech, but in the discussion of it in §4 on [ɛ] the final vowel changes are not added.

1. [i] as in *bead, meet, sea* (rendered [i:] by Jones).

Australians and New Zealanders both prefer to shorten this vowel to [ɛ] in cases in which it is a primary or intermediate vowel. Thus:

<i>economics</i>	becomes	[ɛkɒnɒmɪks]	rather than	[ikɒnɒmɪks]
<i>evolution</i>	„	[ɛvɒluʃən]	„ „	[ivɒluʃən]
<i>obesity</i>	„	[ɒbesɪtɪ]	„ „	[ɒbisɪtɪ]
<i>amenities</i>	„	[əmenɪtɪz]	„ „	[əmɪnɪtɪz]
<i>tenet</i>	„	[tenɛt]	„ „	[tɪnɛt]

Where this form of shortening does not take place (and in many cases it is quite permissible) there is a strong tendency to diphthongize the vowel. The English tendency to transform [i] into [ij], as in *sea* [sɪj], is noted by Jones and occurs also in Australia. It is not so prevalent as the diphthongized version [ɛɪ] noted by both Mitchell and Wall, as in *tea* [tɛɪ], and *sweets* [swɛɪts]. Other Australasian corruptions are in the direction of [iə] (sometimes [ɪ]) as in *seen* [siən], *been* [biən] (noted by an Australian observer in 1901); [ɛɪ] and [ɛɪj], as in *mean* [mɛɪn] or [mɛɪjn], and *pea* [pɛɪ] or [pɛɪj].

Just as the Australian tends to avoid [i] by using the short [ɛ], he also prefers to use the diphthong [aɪ] in certain (mainly permissible) cases, such as:

<i>crinoline</i>	[krɪnɒlɪn]	rather than	[krɪnɒlɪn]
<i>iodine</i>	[aɪɒdɪn]	„ „	[aɪɒdɪn]
<i>via</i>	[vɪə]	„ „	[vɪə]

2. [ɪ] as in *fit, will, beauty* (final vowel). (Rendered [i] by Jones.)

Jones notes a certain Cockney tendency to render this vowel as [ɛ] and to diphthongize it when it is final, as in *twenty*,

[twentɪ] instead of [twenti]. Wall points out the New Zealand tendency to render final [ɪ] as [i], as in *billy* [bɪli], *city* [sɪti], *industry* [ɪndəstri]. This occurs also in Australia, but a downward pull is exerted by the modification of [i] to [eri]. (Jones notes that in Austral English, "[ɪ] is replaced by the cor-

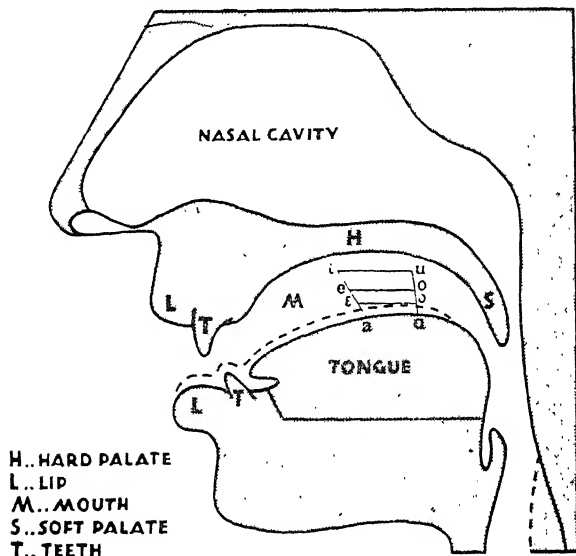


FIG. II.—The dotted line shows the approximate average position of the Australian speaker's mouth compared with the Southern English speaker's mouth. The diagram drawn on the tongue represents the (formalized) positions reached by the highest point of the Southern English speaker's tongue in sounding the eight cardinal vowels. It will be seen that the closing of the Australian mouth reduces the space, between the tongue and the roof of the mouth, in which the vowels are sounded.

responding tense vowel, as in *very* [vɛri].") Mitchell's observations on the Australian use of [ɪ] are confined to noticing certain changes in the direction of [i], [əɪ] and [ə]. There are other important pulls to be noted especially in the direction of [ɜ] and [ʌ]. (This [ʌ] is found in frequent association with the consonant *l*. Thus, *milk* becomes [mʌlk], *shillings* [ʃʌlɪŋs], *railway*, [reɪʌlweɪ], *Phillip*, [fɪlɪp] or [fʌlɪp].) Thus *will* tends to become [wɜl] or [wʌl], *stupid* changes towards [stɜpɪd] and [stʌpɪd], *children* becomes [tɜʃldrɛn] or [tʌʃldrɛn].

As already noted, final [ɪ] tends towards diphthongization—a Cockney perversion; but Australians take it farther into triph-

thongization, so that it becomes [eɪ]. Thus *billy* becomes [bɪleɪ], *nearly*, [nɪrleɪ] (or, since the *r* is often dropped, [nɪleɪ]), *pity*, [pɪteɪ], and so on.

The appearance of the pure [ɪ] in Australian speech is therefore rare, since in both medial and terminal forms it tends to change. The absence of the true [ɪ] is further accented by the Australian's preference for the diphthong [aɪ] in certain words, such as:

<i>finance</i>	[faɪnæns]	rather than	[fɪnæns]
<i>infinite</i>	[ɪnfəɪnɪt]	„ „	[ɪnfɪnɪt]
<i>tribune</i>	[traɪbjun]	„ „	[trɪbjun]
<i>vituperate</i>	[vɪtjupəreɪt]	„ „	[vɪtjupəreɪt]

[ɪ] also appears as the first element of the diphthong [ɪə] as in *here* [hɪə]. This tends to become [eɪə] in Australian speech, with an occasional variation in [əɪə].

3. [e] occurs in standard pronunciation as the first element of the diphthong [eɪ] which has also undergone many changes in this country (rendered [eɪ] by Jones). Example: *day* [deɪ].

Certain preferences may be noted. For instance, the Australian prefers [æ] where he has an alternative pronunciation, and accordingly commits some errors. Thus *basic* becomes [bæsɪk] rather than [beɪsɪk], *matrix* becomes [mætrɪks] before [meɪtrɪks], and the Latin borrowings, *data*, *status*, *gratis* and *apparatus*, are all often rendered with the short [æ] rather than with the diphthong [eɪ].

Rather than use the [ɪ], however, as in the English [sʌndɪ] for *Sunday*, and so for other days of the week, the Australian prefers to retain the [eɪ] diphthong, although this often becomes [eɪj], and suffers further mutilations in the direction of [əɪ], [əaɪ] and [æɪ].

An important modification of [eɪ] is towards [aɪ], although this tends to be absorbed in the triphthongs already mentioned. The gibe that the Australian speaks *Orstrylian* is based on several misinterpretations of his speech. In the first place he does not, by preference, use [ɔ] for [ɒ] (see notes on the vowel [ɔ]) and in the second place he is more inclined to use [əɪ] or [əaɪ] than the diphthong [aɪ].

There is also a slight Australian tendency for [ɜ] and [ʌ] to be used in place of the diphthong [eɪ]. Thus *always* becomes [ɔlwʌz], *Australia* becomes [ɒstrʌljʌ]. These cases do not occur often, however.

4. [ɛ], as in *head, shed, red* (rendered [e] by Jones).

As in Cockney this vowel tends to acquire a certain quality of [ɪ] in Australia, but its more general tendency is towards diphthongization. Thus *very* [vɛrɪ] tends to become [vɛərɪ]; *cherry* tends towards [tʃɛərɪ]; *pen* [pɛn] becomes [pɛən]. There is also a pull away from the front of the tongue towards the central vowels [ə], [ɜ] and [ʌ] in the cases mentioned, i.e. [vɛrɪ], [vɜrɪ] or [vʌrɪ]. The Australian use of [vʌrɪ] was noted in 1901.

The Australian shows certain preferences in avoiding [ɛ] in favour of the diphthong [eɪ], as in *again*, which is rendered [əgeɪn] rather than [əgen]; *says* which is [seɪz] rather than [sez]; *ate* which is [eɪt] rather than [et]—but these are typical spelling pronunciations as well as permissible variations. They are, however, reflected in *get* which often tends to be [gert] rather than [get] and in *you bet* which sometimes becomes [ju bert] rather than [ju bet].

[ɛ] occurs as the first element in the diphthong [eə], as in *chair, there, their*. The Australian mutations tend towards the simple [ɛ] or [ɜ] and the diphthongs [eɜ] and [æə]. As a result we find *very* which has already tended to become [vɛərɪ] undergoing a further change towards [vɛɜrɪ] and [væərɪ].

5. [æ], as in *man, handy, ram*.

The Cockney tendency to modify this to [ɛ] has been noted in both Australia and New Zealand. Thus, *am* [æm] becomes [ɛm]; *hands* [hændz] becomes [hendz]; *can* [kæn] becomes [ken].

Certain preferences for [æ] rather than [ɛɪ] were noted in §3. Examples of a reverse process are *azure*, which tends to become [ɛɜzɜr] rather than [æzɜr]; *basalt*, which becomes [bɛɜsɜlt] rather than [bæsɜlt]; *bade*, which becomes [bɛɜd] rather than [bæd]. The diphthongized version of *basalt* is not correct. The other variations are permissible.

Australians also tend to mutilate [æ] in the direction of the diphthongs [eə] and [æə]. Thus *man* [mæn] tends to become [mɛən] or [mæən]; *tram* [træm] becomes [trɛəm] or [træəm]. The form [æə] was noted in Australia in 1900. The American variant [æə] occurs occasionally.

6. [a]. This vowel occurs as the first element of the diphthong [aɪ].

The modification of this diphthong towards [ɔɪ], which occurs in Cockney, has been alleged in both Australia and New Zealand

over the past century. Its principal Australasian forms are [æi] and the triphthongs [əɔɪ] and [əɔi]. The pure [ɔɪ] version rarely occurs in Australasia, the statement that it does being due largely to slovenly observation. It was probably current up to the end of last century, but has since been modified. It appears occasionally in the form [əɔɪi], the lengthening noted being a somewhat typical feature of Australian speech, especially in final vowels. Thus the Australian would differentiate between *tripe* [traɪp], often rendered [træɪp] or [trəɔɪp] and *fly* [flaɪ], which he would tend to mutilate to [fləɔɪi].

[aɪ] sometimes forms a triphthong with [ə] as in *fire* [faɪə]. The Australian tendency to lengthen final vowels is shown by his modification of this triphthong to [aɪɜ] or [ɔɪɜ]. Sometimes an intrusive [ə] appears before the triphthong and as a result *higher* becomes [həaɪɜ] or [həɔɪɜ].

7. [ɑ], as in *father, bard*.

Australians show a general tendency to avoid the pure [ɑ]. There is, for instance, an increasing—but permissible—preference for the short [æ], especially before nasal consonants, in both Australia and New Zealand. Thus *plant* becomes [plænt] rather than [plant]; *chance*, [tʃæns] rather than [tʃans]; *cenotaph*, [senotæf] rather than [senotaf].

It is in accord with the tendency noted in §5—i.e. the alteration of [æ] to [ɛ] or [ɛə]—that the long [ɑ], which has been altered to [æ], should undergo further changes. Thus *dance*, which is rendered [dɑns] with the long vowel, becomes [dæns] with the short vowel, and then tends to develop into [dɛns] and [deəns].

The long *a* rarely remains undiphthongized in Australian common speech. Jones notes a slight English tendency to use [ɑə] when the vowel ends with an *r*, as in *afar* [əfaə]. The Australian often uses the diphthong [ɑə] before any consonant. He also employs, as an alternative, the odd form [ɑæ]. An observer in 1901 also noted the Australian use of [əɑ] as in [ʃəɑnt] for *shan't* and [kəɑnt] for *can't*.

[ɑ] also tends to change in certain cases towards [ʌ] or [ʌə]. Thus *darling* [dɑlɪŋ] sometimes emerges as [dʌlɪŋ] or [dʌəlɪŋ]; *cart* [kɑt] becomes [kʌt] or [kʌət].

In any case there is a strong Australian inclination to avoid the pure [ɑ].

[ɑ] occurs as the first element of the diphthong [ɑʊ] as in *now, cow, row*.

The Cockney conversion of this to [æʊ], noted by Jones, also occurs in Australian and New Zealand speech, but it is only one of the variations we use. Wall records the alternative [ɪʊ] in New Zealand; this was noted in Australia in 1900.

Australians triphthongize it further to [əʊ] and [ɛʊ], and have also an even more complicated double-diphthong form (noted in 1901) in [ɛɪʊ].

In such words as *power* [paʊə], [aʊ] forms a natural triphthong with [ə], and here again the same Australian tendencies appear, transforming the word to [praʊə], [pɛʊə] or [pæʊə] especially when abetted by nasalization. The Australian tendency to lengthen final vowels emerges in the additional modifications [praʊɜ], [pɛʊɜ] and [pæʊɜ].

8. [ɒ], as in *tot*, *hot* (rendered [ɔ] by Jones).

Widely used in Australia in preference to the long [ɔ] (see §9), but also tending to acquire characteristics of the central vowels, especially [ʌ]. Thus *pocket* [pɒkɪt] tends to become [pʌkɪt]; *hover* becomes [hʌvə]; *because* becomes [bɪkʌz]. A similar tendency is found in the Australasian preference for *Covent (Garden)* [kʌvənt] instead of [kɒvənt] and *hovel* [hʌvəl] instead of [hɒvəl].

Slight diphthongization occurs in the modification of [ɒ] to [əɒ] and [ɒə] (the latter of which was noted in 1900). In any case the tendency is away from the back of the tongue. In a few isolated instances the movement is in the opposite direction from [ɒ] to [ɔ], as used by some Southern English speakers.⁹ Thus *off* [ɒf] occasionally becomes [ɔf], *dog* [dɒg] becomes [dɔg]. Australians are often falsely accused of inserting an *r* after the vowel. This is never done.

9. [ɔ], as in *saw*, *soar* (rendered [ɔ:] by Jones).

The English tendency towards diphthongization as in *four* [fɔə] for [fɔ], noted by Jones, has been current in Australia since 1900 or earlier. Another Australian version is [ɔʌ].

The Australian dislike of using this back vowel is underlined by the following (permissible) preferences:

<i>choral</i>	[kɒrəl]	rather than	[kɔrəl]
<i>floral</i>	[flɒrəl]	„ „	[flɔrəl]
<i>auction</i>	[ɒkʃən]	„ „	[ɔkʃən]
<i>cross</i>	[krɒs]	„ „	[krɔs]
<i>often</i>	[ɒf(tə)n]	„ „	[ɔf(tə)n]

⁹ Ida C. Ward, "The Phonetics of English" (1938) notes: "By those who do not use it such a pronunciation is often considered vulgar."

As noted in §8, however, the Australian tends to push back vowels forward, especially from [ɒ] to [ʌ]. We see this especially well in tracing modifications of the vowel in *salt*, from the long [sɔlt], to [sɒlt], and then successively to [sʌlt], [sʌɐlt] and [sɛlt] all of which are current in Australia.

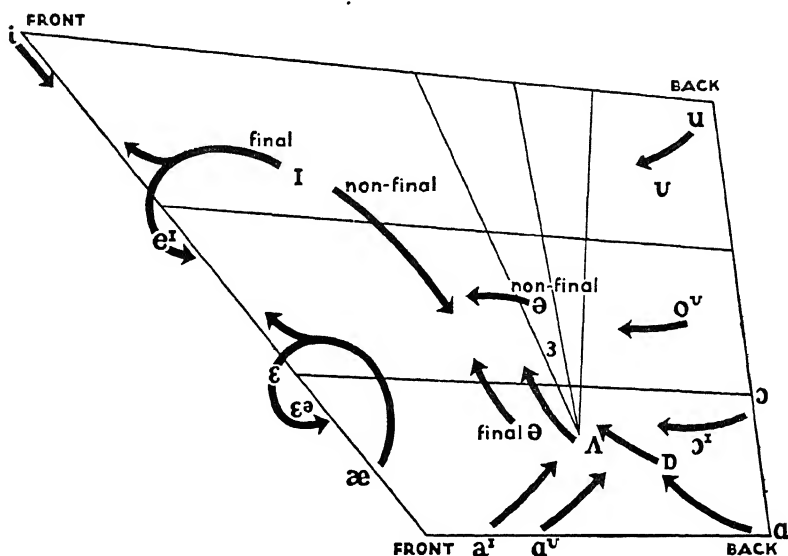


FIG. III.—The arrows indicate the direction of vowel changes in Australian speech compared with Southern English speech.

The degeneration of *water* [wɔtə] to [wɒtə] and *daughter* [dɔtə] to [dɒtə] was noted in 1901. The use of [mɒrɒn] for [mɔrɒn] is also current. In the case of *authority* [əθɔrɪtɪ], we find the tendency towards both [ʌθɔrɪtɪ] and [əθɔrɪtɪ], which is in keeping with the movement away from the back of the tongue noted above.

[ɔ] is also found as the first element in the diphthong [ɔɪ], as in *boy* [bɔɪ]. The Australian is inclined to triphthongize this, thereby drawing it away from the back of the tongue, by the introduction of an initial [ə] and by a lengthening of the final [ɪ] to [i]. Thus *boy* tends to become either [bəɔɪ] or [bəɔi]. This is in accord with modifications of the diphthong [aɪ], noted in §6, towards the triphthongs [əɔɪ] and [əɔi].

10. [ʌ], as in *but*.

In Australian this is generally pure, but it sometimes under-

goes changes towards [ə] and [ɜ] and towards the diphthong [əʌ]. (Ida C. Ward, in her "Phonetics of English", notes that many people in the north of England and the Midlands have difficulty in pronouncing [ʌ] before *r*, in words like *hurry* [hʌrɪ]; they use a kind of short [ɜ] vowel in such positions, [hɜrɪ]. This is a typical Australian feature.) It has tended to displace [ə] as the general-utility vowel in unstressed syllables.

The displacing of [ə] by [ʌ] is found especially in cases such as *again* [əgeɪn], which becomes [ʌgeɪn]; *about* [əbaʊt], which becomes [ʌbaʊt]; *banana* [bənanə], which becomes [bʌnanə].

A movement in the other direction, from [ʌ] to [ɒ], is perceivable in the occasional cases of *dromedary* [drɒmədəɪrɪ], instead of [drʌmədəɪrɪ]; *agriculture* [ægrɪkʌltʃər], instead of [ægrɪkʌltʃər]; and *ultimate* [ɒltɪmət], instead of [ʌltɪmət]. There is nothing peculiarly Australian about this tendency; it is noted by Jones in Southern English. It can be said that the Australian generally prefers [ʌ] to [ɒ].

11. [o], which occurs as the first element of the diphthong [ou], as in *know* [noʊ] (rendered [ou] by Jones).

The Cockney conversion of this to [ʌʊ] is noted in Australia by Mitchell; the additional Cockney version [ɔʊ] was noted in Australia in 1900 and in New Zealand by Wall.

Australia has, however, produced a number of alternative forms not found in Cockney, such as [ʌə]. In certain unstressed vowels, for instance, it tends towards [ɒ], as in *opaque* [oupeɪk], which becomes [ɒpeɪk], *November* [noʊvembə], which becomes [nɒvembə]. The English use of [ə] for [ou] in unstressed vowels is noted by Jones; it is common in Australia, as in *swallowing* [swɒləʊɪŋ], which becomes [swɒləɪɪŋ]. In final vowels Australians tend to render it [ɜ] rather than [ə]. Thus *piano* [prɪənoʊ] becomes [prɪænz] rather than [prɪənə]; *window* [wɪndəʊ] becomes [wɪndɜ] rather than [wɪndə].

Australians have also developed this diphthong extensively in the direction of triphthongs. In cases when [ou] is followed by an *n* the diphthong is often rendered [ouə], thus *grown* [grəʊn] becomes [grəʊən]; *sown* [soʊn] becomes [soʊən]. The form [ouʌ] often displaces [ouə] in the above cases.

Other Australian triphthong versions of [ou] include [ʌou] and [əou], both noted originally in 1900.

12. [u], as in *boot* (rendered [u:] by Jones).

Mitchell notes an Australian tendency towards [əʊ], but this is more generally given the form [ɪʊ], recorded in Australia in

1901 and in New Zealand by Wall. Thus *boot* [but] becomes either [bəʊt] or [brʊt]. A form of compromise is sometimes reached in the use of [ɜʊ]. In any case the general Australian tendency is, like the Cockney, away from the back of the tongue.

In words such as *room* and *broom* the [u] fairly regularly becomes [ʊ], as with many English speakers. Thus [rʊm] instead of [rum], [brʊm] instead of [brum]. The [ʊ] often tends to change in the direction of [ə] and [əʊ]: thus, [rəm] or [rəʊm]. *School* [skul] frequently becomes [skəʊl] and even [skɜʊl].

13. [ʊ], as in *book* (rendered [u] by Jones).

The general Australian tendency to bring forward the back vowels is shown by a frequent preference of [ə] for [ʊ]. Thus *book* [bʊk] becomes [bək] and sometimes [bʌk].

[ʊ] occurs as the first element in the diphthong [ʊə], as in *poor* [pʊə]. Jones says that the form [ʊ] is preferable to [u], which is sometimes used.

Jones notes that Educated Southern English speakers often use [ɔ] in place of the diphthong. Thus *poor* becomes [pɔ]. This use is popular in Australia, but fresh diphthongs—showing once again the tendency to bring forward vowels—in the form of [ɔə] and [ɔɜ] are also widely current.

In cases where [j] tends to be included before [ʊə], triphthongization often occurs in Australian speech. Thus *curious* [kjuəriəs] becomes [kəjʊəriəs], *fury* [fjuəri] becomes [fəjʊəri], *cure* [kjʊə] becomes [kəjʊə]. The same triphthong also makes its appearance in *jury* [dʒʊəri], which becomes [dʒəʊəri]; *plural* [plʊərəl], which becomes [pləʊərəl], etc.

14. [ɜ], as in *bird* (rendered [ə:] by Jones).

As noted in §10, [ʌ] has tended to displace [ə] as the general-utility vowel in unstressed syllables. However, [ʌ] has a keen competitor in Australian speech in [ɜ]. There is much less distinction between [ə], [ʌ] and [ɜ] in Australasian speech than in any other form of English. Just as it was noted in §10 that [ʌ] tended towards the diphthong [əʌ], so [ɜ] tends towards the diphthongs [əɜ], [əʌ] and [ɜə], showing how intimate has become the relationship between these vowels. Thus *girl* [gɜl] becomes [gəɜl] and [gəʌl], and when the ending is slurred in typical Australian fashion it becomes [gɜəl].

Just as the Australian tends to lengthen a final [ɪ], as in *billy*, to [i] by raising it and pushing it forward in the mouth, so he tends to convert a final [ə] into [ɜ] by the same process. Thus *bonzer*, which is sometimes written *bonza*, tends always to be

rendered [bɒnzɜ] rather than [bɒnzə], and *digger* tends to be [dɪgɜ] rather than [dɪgə].

15. [ə], as in the final vowel of *china* and the initial vowel of *about*.

It has already been pointed out that this tends to become [ɜ] when final, and [ʌ] when it is succeeded by a consonant, as in *china* [tʃaɪnə], which tends towards [tʃaɪnɜ], and *alight* [əlaɪt], which becomes [ʌlaɪt].

This cannot be laid down as a watertight rule, however, for many variations occur. Thus *octopus* [ɒktəpəs] becomes either [ɒktɜpəs] or [ɒktʌpəs]; *monologue* [mɒnələg] becomes either [mɒnɜləg] or [mɒnʌləg]; *bulletin* [bʊlətɪn] becomes either [bʊlɜtɪn] or [bʊlʌtɪn]; *central* [sentrəl] becomes either [sentrɜl] or [sentrʌl]; *cupboard* [kʌbəd] becomes [kʌbɜd] or [kʌbʌd]; *moment* [moumənt] becomes [moumɜnt] or [moumʌnt].

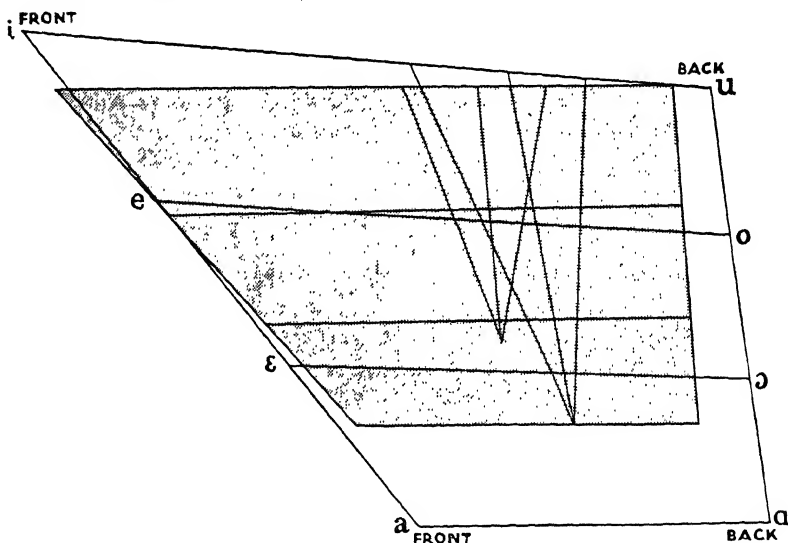


FIG. IV.—The shaded portion shows the "tongue area" in which Australian vowels are sounded compared with Southern English speech. See Fig. V.

In the case of *banana* both forms appear, as in [bʌnʌnɜ] which sometimes undergoes a complete reversal by becoming [bɜnʌnʌ].

The vital part played by [ə] in the general modification of Australian vowels towards diphthongs, triphthongs and even quadriphthongs has been noted in the detailed comments given in

this section. It is evidence of the extraordinarily strong pull in Australian speech towards mixed or central vowels. In every one of the 15 sections dealt with the vowel [ə] will be perceived, even though in some cases its influence may be small.

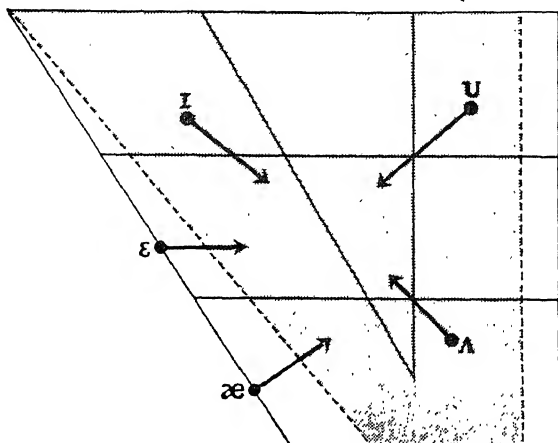


FIG. V.—Vowel changes in United States speech. Compare Fig. IV with this formalized diagram from Ida C. Ward's "The Phonetics of English". She explains the diagram as follows: "Dots represent normal British English vowel positions; arrows, the direction towards the position in which American vowels tend to be pronounced; the dotted lines, roughly the front and back limit of American vowels."

Summary

For the purpose of easy reference, the principal vowel changes (or perhaps it would be better to call them vowel tendencies) noted in the above analysis are given below:

- i > ij, əɪ, iə, ɪi, eɪ, eɪj
- ɪ > eɪ, eɪi, i, əɪ, ə, ɜ, ʌ
- ɪə > eɪɜ, əɪɜ
- eɪ > aɪ, eɪj, əɪ, əɔɪ, əaɪ, æi, ɜ, ʌ
- ε > εə, ə, ɜ, ʌ, eɪ
- εə > ε, ɜ, εɜ, æə
- æ > ε, εə, əæ, æə
- aɪ > ɔɪ, æi, əɔɪ, əɔi, əɔɪi
- aɪə > aɪɜ, ɔɪɜ, əaɪɜ, əɔɪɜ
- ɑ > æ, ɔæ, əɑ, ɑə, ʌ, ʌə

au	>	æu, iau, əau, ɛau, eiau
auə	>	iauə, əauə, æuə, iauɜ, əauɜ, æuɜ
ɒ	>	ʌ, əɒ, ɒə
ɔ	>	ɔə, ɔʌ, ɒ
ɔɪ	>	əɔɪ, əɔi
ʌ	>	ə, ɜ, əʌ, ɒ
ou	>	ʌu, ɔu, ʌə, ɒ, ə, ɜ, ouə, ouʌ, ʌou, əou
u	>	əu, iu, ɜu, u, ə
ʊ	>	ə, ʌ
uə	>	ɔ, ɔə, ɔɜ
ɜ	>	əɜ, əʌ, ɜə
ə	>	ɜ, ʌ

Important points to be noted in these mutations are:

(a) A strong preference for half-close and half-open vowels (81 of the examples include either half-close or half-open vowels).

(b) A strong intervention of mixed vowels (71 of the examples include mixed vowels [ə], [ʌ] and [ɜ]; in only 29 cases have single English vowels or diphthongs been replaced by single vowels in Australian speech and in 20 of these 29 cases the vowels are mixed).

(c) Many new diphthongs, triphthongs and even quadriphthongs have been created (only 29 of the examples are single vowels; 39 of the examples are diphthongs).

(b) Nasalization

Nasalization is one of the most persistent features of Australian speech, practically every vowel or combination of vowels in Australian speech tending to acquire nasal characteristics. Lloyd James notes the frequent Australian use in his "Historical Introduction to French Phonetics" (1929).

Nasalization is produced by lowering the soft palate (see Fig. II) so that the air escapes through both mouth and nose.

In my analysis of Australian vowel sounds no mention was made of nasalization, since it would have entailed much reduplication of vowels with a *tilde* (~) over them, as in [ī], [ǣ], etc. It can be accepted as beyond question that Australians indulge in large-scale nasalization.

This is probably brought about by the fact that the Australian does not open his mouth as widely as the Southern Englishman; he has less space to breathe through and this encourages greater

breathing through the nose. Vowel sounds therefore escape more readily into the nasal cavity, because of the lowered soft palate, than in Southern English speech. (See section 4.)

(c) **Consonants**

As Mitchell observes, the main differences between Australian and Educated Southern English speech are vocalic, but he has paid a much too sketchy attention to Australian consonants to be able to support that contention with facts.

English consonants fall into five main groups—the labial, dental, palatal, velar and glottal. Twelve, including the fricative [ɹ], are included in the dental group; six in the labial group. If the Australian has modified his consonants at all, such modification should be best perceivable in these main groups. And this is found to be the case.

The bi-labial [p], [b], [m] and [w]—sounded, that is, by bringing the lips together—have all undergone certain changes, because the Australian tends to draw his lips back against his teeth more than the Englishman. His lips are often stretched tightly across the teeth and are much less supple in their move-

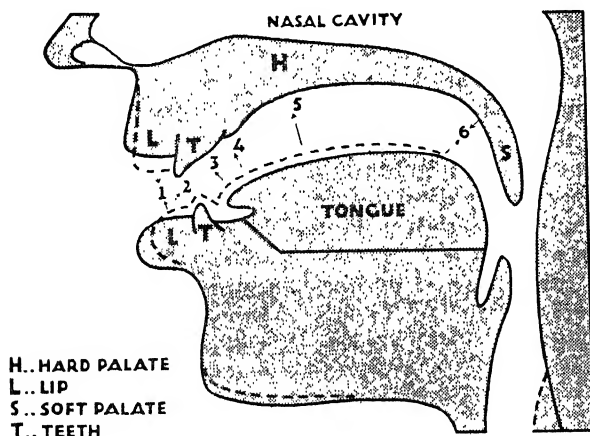


FIG. VI.—Diagram showing places of formation of all except glottal consonants in the English speaker's mouth, compared with the more closed mouth and the spread lips of the Australian (indicated in slightly exaggerated form by the dotted lines). The consonants indicated are: 1, bi-labial; 2, labio-dental; 3, dental; 4, alveolar (which are often identified with dental consonants); 5, palatal; 6, velar.

ments than English lips. The oft-produced but inaccurate description "lip-laziness", of which Australians are accused, is largely based on this *spreading*. Although, of necessity, the Australian uses his lips to enunciate the bi-labial consonants [p], [b], [m] and [w], it is with a more forward part of his lips than that used by the English (see Fig. VI).

The labio-dental [f] and [v]—formed between the bottom lip and the top front teeth—are affected similarly.

Because the Australian does not open his mouth as widely as the Southern English speaker, the dental and post-dental consonants, [n], [l], [r], [θ], [ð], [s], [z] and [ɹ]—which are sounded between the tip of the tongue and the top teeth—tend to become markedly alveolar. That is, they all tend, more than in English speech, to be sounded between the tip of the tongue and the gums. This tendency is particularly evident in the fricatives—[θ], [ð], [s], [z] and [ɹ]. The nasal [n], the lateral [l] and the rolled [r] are also formed slightly farther back in the Australian mouth than in the English. The dental plosives [t] and [d] are rarely modified.

Mitchell points out that Australians use "a more hissing [s] and [ʃ], generally with unrounded lips". Wall notes that [l] tends to be dull and to become inaudible. The consonant [ʒ] is often palatalized.

The palatal [j] seems to have undergone no noticeable change, but the velar [k] and [g] tend to move forward slightly in the mouth, not only because the Australian opens his mouth less than the Southern Englishman, but because he habitually lowers the soft palate in sounding his vowels. The velar [ŋ] also seems to be slightly displaced for a similar reason.

The glottal [h] tends to be lost in Australian speech because of the lowering of the soft palate, which allows it to pass into the nasal cavity instead of into the mouth. The glottal plosive [ʔ] (as found in the Cockney and Scottish rendering of [bbʔl] for [bɒtl] (i.e. *bottle*) is practically unknown in Australia.

(d) Stress

As pointed out in my notes on New Zealand speech in "New Zealand Slang" there is a common tendency in both Australia and New Zealand to use longer word-groupings than the English. This is reflected in the slower rhythm of our speech—the quality of monotony that has been commented on so many times.

An important point to remember in discussing the stresses in

Australian speech is that morphemic emphasis—i.e. the stressing of words like *by*, *and*, *but*, *to*, *in*, etc.—is strongly marked in both Australia and New Zealand, although it is developed to a greater degree in the latter country than here. This tends to give our speech an even quality that lacks music and cadences.

Australians also use many spelling pronunciations, which result in strong vowels being used in unstressed positions. This also militates against rhythmic speech. Thus: [maʊntən] for [maʊntɪn], [fɔwəd] for [fɔwəd], [dɪfɪkəlt] for [dɪfɪkəlt], [dɪkləm] for [dɪkləm], [brɪzbeɪn] for [brɪzbən]. It is not altogether beside the point to remark that, while Australians are on the average poorly educated, they are ardent readers. Pronunciations acquired by reading rather than by education are prominent in Australian speech and their collective effect on the language is considerable.

4.—DEDUCTIONS AND REMEDIES

The inevitable conclusion forced upon us after an examination of English vowels in Australia is that a large-scale reshuffling has occurred. In Fig. III the general directions involved in these alterations are indicated by arrows: we can see that the main tendency is away from the back of the tongue, combined with a tendency to lift the tongue higher and to raise the low or open vowels, as indicated in Fig. I.

In Figs II and IV we find what has happened. The Australian's tongue movements are much more restricted than those of the Southern Englishman. His vowels are brought more closely together; they are more liable to influence one another. We find this influence in the extensive corruption of pure vowels into diphthongs and triphthongs. The central or mixed vowels [ə], [ʌ] and [ɜ] seem to be almost everywhere. This can be only because Australian vowels are in relatively closer relation to each other than Southern English vowels.

It must be remembered—as shown in Fig. II—that the tongue has little space in which to move in the creation of vowel sounds. If the vowels are pushed closer together there can be but one result: the vowels will tend to change their "standard" English identity. There can be little doubt, also, as to *why* this has occurred.

The reason for the vowel changes indicated in Figs III and IV is that the Australian's tongue is closer to the roof of his mouth than the Southern Englishman's.

The simple conclusion is that Australians do not open their

mouths as widely as the English. As a result the tongue has less space to move in. Vowels are pushed into closer relation to one another. To compensate for this compressing, there is a slight movement forward in the mouth (shown in Figs III and IV).

If we examine Figs II and VI we can appreciate not only what has happened to our vowels, but what has happened to our consonants. The dotted line in Fig. II shows the relatively closer relationship between the tongue and the roof of the mouth in Australian speech than in Southern English. In Fig. VI we see this combined with a drawing back of the lips against the teeth.

Certain changes in the labial consonants have already been linked with this spreading and tightening of the lips.

It is in accord with the closing of the mouth, which produces distinct Australian vowel sounds, that dental and post-dental consonants should tend to become alveolar.

It is also in accord with the lowering of the soft palate and the consequent nasalization of vowels that they should tend to be sounded farther forward in the mouth than pure vowels.

What caused this ingrained tendency to speak through lips spread firmly against the teeth, to resist jaw movements, to lower the soft palate habitually, it is difficult to say. Perhaps the thousands of men who have gone out into the bush and the outback to work in scorching heat, amid dust and flies, who have acquired their habit of shouting because they work outdoors—perhaps these can tell us something.

They should, at least, be able to give us some indication why the vowels most avoided in Australian speech are those in which the lips are open (see Fig. I). And if they can help us here we may be able to piece together some more of this jigsaw puzzle: the closer mouth, the decrease in space for the tongue to work in, the lowering of the soft palate.

The Australian way of speaking represents something new in world speech; but a good deal of it is inherited. Some of the elements approximate those of Cockney, others are reflected in the English provinces, especially in the north. These were imported tendencies, confirmed and exaggerated or modified by our way of life and our environment. And these tendencies have bred other tendencies.

Even now our dialect is only in the process of formation. We are just old enough to appreciate these inherited and acquired tendencies. Whither it will take us is hard to say, because tremendous efforts will probably be exerted to correct certain

features of it; but we can rest assured that in another century Australian speech will be as well defined as American.

Young as it is, the Australian accent has become extraordinarily well established throughout Australasia, although in different degrees. As J. F. Fraser noted in 1910, the accent "is not limited to one stratum of society"; even within single families it appears in different forms.¹⁰

V. Desmond declared in 1911 that our dialect is "as strongly developed among the educated people as among the peasantry [*sic*]".

Earlier still, in 1902, J. H. M. Abbott had referred to "Australia, where all people speak more or less alike", an opinion reflected by Thomas Courtney in 1928¹¹ when he remarked, not altogether accurately:

Nowhere else on the earth's surface is there an area so large as that covered by Australia in which one may travel from end to end without noticing any difference of language, dialect or even pronunciation.

In 1937 Sir Richard Terry, examiner for the Trinity College of Music and Elocution, London, told us¹² that we possessed the great advantage of a uniform speech, that it was not as bad as Australians thought it was, and that, although it was naturally in process of formation, it did not seem to be developing "any very bad faults".

Mitchell¹³ attempts to split our dialect into two types; first, what he describes as "the educated cultivated type of speech, approximating to the educated speech of Southern England, but far from identical with it" and second "the popular, broad, characteristically Australian speech". He adds:

These divisions of Australian speech do not correspond to geographical or social divisions. They do not correspond at all closely to professional groupings. An eminent lawyer or surgeon may use the broad Australian speech, while a factory hand may use the educated speech. Perhaps they correspond most consistently to educational divisions.

10 Vance Palmer noted this in the "ABC Weekly" of 26 September 1942. "There is a lot of ugly, flat speaking in Australia, but not more, I think, than in other countries," he said. "With us, though, it is more noticeable, for the divisions cut through classes, even through families. One brother will speak well, another badly; a man working at the bench may be worth listening to, while his

employer talks like an uncultured boor."

11 In the "Sydney Morning Herald", 2 June.

12 An interview in the "Sydney Morning Herald", 21 September.

13 In the "ABC Weekly", 12 September 1942; but stated earlier in the "ABC Weekly" of 9 November 1940.

As a vague proposition this is generally correct, but it does not strike the nail on the head by any means. There is an exceedingly apt example in the case of Sydney University where not only the students but their professors and lecturers possess strongly marked characteristics found in the worst Australian speakers.

I do not claim to be the first to discover this fact. A writer in the "Bulletin" of 11 August 1900 remarked: "The worst experts in the newest of the living languages are Sydney University students. They speak a peculiarly horrible brand of it." He also spoke of "schoolmasters who are among the worst offenders".

Another writer in the "Bulletin" of 27 October 1900 declared: "The characteristic intonations [of Australian speech] are common even amongst University students."

Before the Legacy Club, Sydney, on 14 April 1932, Lawrence Campbell, an elocutionist, declared¹⁴ that many men in Australia of the highest general education were exceptionally bad speakers. Scientists and university professors were among the worst in this respect, he said.

Then there was the quip by Judge Curlewis, at Sydney Quarter Sessions on 3 November 1933:

It is a maxim recognized wherever the English language is spoken, and in some places where it is not, including the University of Sydney, that you cannot convict a man on suspicion.

We can see that the two divisions imposed on an educational basis by Mitchell—roughly, according to him, the good and the bad—are totally inadequate. We must admit the existence of at least three types.

First, the most slovenly form of our speech, characterized by all the typical Australian features we have noted, the closed mouth, the taut lips, the lowered soft palate, and the consequent vocalic and consonantal modifications.

Second, an improved form of the above, still retaining the features noted, but to a less degree. In short, a type of speech in which some effort is made to resist the mixing or centralization of vowels, and in which nasalization is avoided, as a consequence of a more opened mouth.

Third, a cultivated type of speech, still containing typical Australian elements, but characterized by an attempt to preserve English vowels by opening the mouth and by an absence of nasalization.

¹⁴ Quoted from the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 15 April 1932.

This third type is the most interesting, because it must eventually become a norm of Australian speech. It is not by any means an inevitable concomitant of good education, although it is more likely to be a concomitant of good education than of the reverse.¹⁵

It is necessary here to disagree strongly with Mitchell on his unwarranted allegation that "vocabulary, use of slang and grammatical usage are not relevant to an examination of speech sounds". In Australia, at any rate, there is an intimate link between features of the Australian language and our accent.¹⁶

In earlier pages several comments have been made on the persistent lowbrowism apparent in our slang and colloquial speech. This lowbrowism has a great deal to do with our accent and the perpetuation of some of the worst features of it.

In the first place the Australian tends to regard any attempt to speak carefully and well as "sissy" or affected. Australians have brought a good deal of that upon themselves.

In "New Zealand Slang" it was pointed out that a general contempt is held by the New Zealand public for radio announcers on national stations who attempt to follow the B.B.C. style of pronunciation. These announcers are continually lapsing, either through forgetfulness or hurry, into typical characteristics of New Zealand speech. They cannot disguise their identity and the public knows they are posturing.

Exactly the same thing happens in Australia, although the A.B.C. would have it thought otherwise. Time and again we find an announcer, who is obviously trying to pass himself off as a Southern English speaker, slipping into Australian vowel

¹⁵ The "Sydney Morning Herald" of 19 June 1926 noted in a leader on "The Australian Accent": "It is not a question of education. All sorts and conditions of folk show these characteristics in their speech, University graduates and professional men no less than others who have not had their advantages." However, the "Herald" adds: "Unfortunately, our departures from the norm are of a sort which, in other parts of the English-speaking world, are identified with lack of education."

¹⁶ Vance Palmer regards this link as of great importance. In an address before the Australian English Association in June 1934 he said: "People

are always worrying about our accent, the impurity of our vowels, the nasality of our tone; but they never worry about the poverty of our talk. If our speech were richer, if we cared more for what we said, we would probably say it better. It is only when people do not care, that their voices get thin, that they clip their consonants and use three vowels instead of one."

In a discussion on Australian accent in the "ABC Weekly" of 26 September 1942, Palmer observed: "A people's speech is healthily alive when it is vigorous, picturesque, full of the personally-coined images that betray eyes and minds actively at work."

variations—not all of those variations, certainly, but some of them. And that is enough to justify the public's challenge of affectation.

Of course, this is only part of the picture. There are other reasons. The Australian doesn't like mincing speech because he doesn't mince himself. It is impossible for the Australian to use pure vowels while preserving his habitual lip, mouth, tongue and soft palate positions. He is naturally inclined to be impatient of pure vowels. How much more impatient he becomes, therefore, when treated to affected English vowels, especially from the mouth of a fellow-Australian.

The "Sydney Morning Herald" in a leader on 1 January 1934 said: "If he [i.e. anyone] talks Oxford or 'standard' English here he will immediately be liable to condemnation as 'effeminate' or 'talking like a Pommy.'" Professor G. S. Browne, Professor of Education at Melbourne University, in August 1939, declared: "Any type of speech with the least hint of affectation repels the average Australian." And here is an opinion by L. A. Robson, headmaster of the Church of England Grammar School, Sydney, in the "ABC Weekly" of 19 September 1942:

In this country there has been a tendency towards vulgarity both in speech and in bearing. There are many who think that in order to be tough it is necessary to be rough. . . . All schools have to fight continually against the inclination of boys to believe that good speech must necessarily be affected.

In the next issue of the same journal, Vance Palmer added:

Youngsters should be taught that clear utterance is a manly (or womanly)¹⁷ thing, that it is not obtained without moving the lips, and that a vowel is not improved by being split into three.

There is nothing new about these opinions. In 1901 a writer in the "Bulletin" (9 March) noted that "in many bush places if the schoolmaster speaks correctly he is classed as 'flash'".

In an article in the English "Listener" of 15 December 1938,

17 Australian women are, generally speaking, better exponents of good speech than the men, although, conversely, some of the worst corruptions in Australian speech are heard from women in the first group mentioned on p. 344. Sir Richard Terry, Trinity College examiner, remarked in 1937 that Australian women spoke better than the men because they opened their mouths. A. J. Marshall, "Australia Limited" (1942), remarks

that "from primary school to the grave" Australian women speak better than the men. Marshall adds, on the "sissy" attitude: "To talk Australian in the approved 'non-sissy' manner you must all but close your mouth during conversation. To be non-sissy, to be masculine, to be tough—these may be the real reasons why Australians and Australian children prefer to half-close their mouths and talk through their noses."

Dal Stivens, an Australian, attempted to explain the "slovenliness in Australian speech" as "a psychological inhibition". To this extent he was partly right, but his explanation was wrong. He put it down to aggressive masculinity.

The Australian may be aggressively masculine in some respects, though I am inclined to think it is little more than a fiction he has created round himself, but his aversion from affected English speech is more physiological than psychological. Affected English speech represents the greatest possible difference, apart from a foreign tongue, from Australian speech. Compare the tongue movements in Australian and English vowels in Fig. III.

I regard this as the crux of the whole matter. The Australian dislikes "affected" English as foisted on him by the B.B.C. and its A.B.C. shadows, and by Oxonians and others of their kind, not only because he is accustomed to his own way of speaking, but because he finds it impossible to speak as they do.

Thousands of Australians, especially those who regard themselves as socially "select", attempt to pass themselves off as exponents of B.B.C. English; but most of them, whether English-born or Australian-born, betray Australian characteristics in their speech, if, at the time of speaking, they have lived three years or more in the Commonwealth. In many cases the period is much less.

Thousands of European refugees who came to Australia in the late 1930s possess undeniable Australian speech features. English refugees from the Orient are undergoing the same modification in their speech. English children, for whom Australians provided homes during World War No. 2, have acquired many Australian characteristics.¹⁸

These points show that the Australian accent, to which the average Australian clings staunchly, is a solid and formidable thing. A few affectations and pretences that may humbug the ordinary man, do not deceive any reasonably intelligent observer. They would certainly not deceive the alert Englishman if all the varied people mentioned above were suddenly transported from Australia to England.

We can see by now that the definition given to the third type

¹⁸ In the Sydney "Telegraph" of 10 December 1942 a report stated: "Two years of Australian life has knocked the accent out of the voices of British child evacuees. This was revealed tonight when the children had a Christmas talk from Melbourne

with their parents 12,000 miles away. Two years ago, at a similar broadcast, thick Yorkshire, Cockney, Scottish and East Anglian voices were heard. Tonight the voices were Australian in tone and idiom."

of our speech is already inadequate—that some distinction ought to be made between educated Australian speakers, who do not resent being Australian, and the posturers and exponents of what Stivens calls “P. and O. English” who try to disguise their country of origin, but rarely do more than deceive themselves. I have been content to group these people together, because I am confident that Educated Australian will prevail over P. and O. English, though the struggle may yet be long and arduous.

The development of the three Australian types detailed earlier is a reflection of something that has also occurred in England and America. This is the creation of a buffer type between the worst and the best types of speech. We find an excellent example of this in London, where the extremes are Cockney and Educated Southern English (there is, of course, an affected but unimportant version of the latter). Between these groups we find millions of people using a clearly enunciated type of speech that contains characteristics of both Cockney and Southern English, yet could not be designated one or the other.

The differences between the Australian types are not yet as great as in the English. Eventually, however, they will become clearcut.

Type 1, the worst, will tend to become confirmed in its errors and mutilation of pure vowel sounds, in its shift of consonants, in its nasalization. Type 3 will tend to improve, since it is used by people who have some knowledge of clearly enunciated speech and the pleasure it gives both to the speaker and an intelligent listener. Type 2 will tend to diverge from type 1 because, just as in England where Cockney is a synonym for all that is worst in speech, an increasing number of people will attempt to avoid some of its more obvious characteristics and to absorb some of the characteristics of type 3.

Australian lowbrowism (a product of poor education) is partially responsible for the fact that there is much less differentiation between the Australian types than between the main English types.

Consider this biting comment by Marshall in “Australia Limited”:

It is a very sobering experience to hear a Lord Mayor of the second city of the British Empire [i.e. Sydney] drop his aitches and mangle his vowels at a public reception to a notable visitor. It is odd to talk with a Minister for Education who obviously has never been educated beyond sixth grade. It is a weird experience to come back to a country and find cabinet ministers, school headmasters, clergymen, bank managers, medical officers, with accents like wharfingers.

This lowbrowism or speaking-down is partly a concession to ignorance. It is a symptom not only of a man's poor education, but also of the efforts of better educated men to save him from feelings of unease and embarrassment.

Marshall adds:

The slovenly speech of the Australian is just another indication of his apathy towards learning and fitting himself to be a citizen of the world rather than remaining a rustic.

It should be a source of national shame that there are probably more ill-educated politicians in Australia than in any other country. The Australian teacher, from primary school to university, is probably the worst exponent of spoken speech to be found in any educational system in the world.

The problem of the politician will be largely remedied when Australia has one Parliament instead of seven. The problem of the teacher will be solved when it is insisted that he speak better.¹⁹ In the "ABC Weekly" of 19 September 1942, the Chancellor of Melbourne University (Mr Justice Lowe) said:

If the teachers are first taught the importance of vowel formation and take care to impart this knowledge to their pupils, the main blot on Australian speech would be on its way to disappear.

And Dora H. Suttor, in a letter to the "ABC Weekly" of 26 September 1942, wrote: "I think the universities are greatly to blame, inasmuch as the majority of State school teachers with University degrees speak abominably."

These opinions are by no means new. In 1893 the "Bulletin" observed: "At present there is no effort made to raise the standard of State school accent." In 1934 the "Sydney Morning Herald" said:

If good English is at a discount in the pupil's social surroundings, there will be a tendency to regard the pure speech of the well-spoken teacher as something unnatural, a mere professional mark, just as the adult may regard the preaching of the advocate of religion. . . . If the teacher is not to blame for *Orstralian* whose, then, is the responsibility?

Since we have seen that at the root of the Australian accent is a failure to open the mouth, and that associated with this are

¹⁹ United Kingdom education authorities realized this need many years ago. In the 1921 report of the Departmental Committee of the Board of Education—"The Teaching

of English in England"—stress is laid on the fact "that increased attention should be paid in the [Teachers'] Training Colleges to spoken English".

nasalization and a tendency to spread the lips tightly across the teeth, the obvious means of avoiding the worst features of this accent is to insist that teachers and pupils alike correct these faulty habits.

The Australian accent has had more than 150 years in which to acquire certain well-ingrained tendencies. To attempt to eradicate it entirely would be not only foolish but dangerous. A long process of modification must be undertaken.

The "Herald" made a telling point when it wrote on 26 August 1940:

Since good English, like charity, begins at home, we can best remedy our undeniable lingual deficiencies by making diction a compulsory subject of the school curriculum, as it should be.

There can be no compromise with this attitude if we honestly intend to improve Australian speech. We must be done with people who attempt to tell us that all is well, because all is not well.

Our accent is bad; it is so deep-rooted that we will never eradicate it entirely. But we can modify it, and we can tackle that problem of modification with the least possible difficulty in the schools.

Mitchell's declaration²⁰ that "there is *nothing* wrong with the Australian voice or speech; it is as acceptable and as pleasant, as *good English*, as any speech to be heard anywhere in the English-speaking commonwealth" is arrant nonsense. There is a great deal wrong with Australian speech. Except in the third type it does not come within cooe of the best English as used by an Englishman or an American.

As Professor G. S. Browne remarked in 1939: "There is no reason why Australians should not have a distinctive Australian speech. It is only a slovenliness that needs correcting." If by slovenliness we describe the features of the Australian accent I have detailed—closed mouth, spread lips, lowered soft palate—then we can accept Browne's view as one of the highest possible value.

In an effort to modify the Australian accent some enthusiasts for "the pure well of English" advocate the wholesale adoption of Educated Southern English as a norm for Australia. As a potential cure this is nothing more than a pipe-dream because Southern English speech is almost as foreign to Australians as it is to Americans.

²⁰ "ABC Weekly", 12 September 1942. The italics are his.

We can modify our accent, but we cannot displace it with another accent. As Professor W. K. Hancock wrote in "Australia" (1930):

Those teachers who struggle against the common curse of debased English [in Australia] would do better to develop the resources of this legitimate accent rather than attempt the impossible task of impressing upon scoffing pupils Oxford English thrice removed.

A similar point was made by Sir Richard Terry in 1937. "Australians must make up their minds how they are going to speak," he said. "It would be better for them to develop a logical pronunciation of their own English than to copy the dialect of another country."

Here is the position in a nutshell: we have an accent, it is legitimate, but it has objectionable features that are within our powers to modify. Are we going to let our accent run to seed? Will we take it in hand? Or will we try to ignore it out of existence by clutching at a few tattered shreds of Southern English?

There can be only one answer. We must take this accent of ours in hand without delay.

Already—*pace* Mitchell—we are beginning to develop dialects within this dialect of ours. Our accent may be generally uniform throughout the entire continent, but certain differences are beginning to appear, especially between the remote west and the remote east, between the inland and the city, between the far north and the far south.²¹ If we allow these divergences to become confirmed the task of modifying our bad habits will become insuperable.

The sooner we start on the task—which must be started one day, in any case—the better for us and for our lingual future.

5.—THEORIES

Australians have heard many theories about the origin of their accent—that it is due to temperament, to climate, to laziness, to Cockney inheritance, to nasal catarrh, to pollen in the air. It is worth while to give close examination to some of these claims, for thereby we may learn a little more about our speech.

Next in popularity to the Cockney theory (examined in section 2) is that of laziness which is usually coupled with other alleged

²¹ Strongly noticeable variations between Australian and New Zealand speech are also apparent.

or proved demerits. Thus, Brunton Gibb in November 1932²² spoke of "nasality, drawling, a bad formation of vowels and weakness in word endings"; F. G. Phillips, of Sydney Grammar School, in September 1932²³ spoke of "nasality, flatness, slovenliness"; in 1934 Judge Sheridan²⁴ spoke of the "absolute slurring of words" in Australian speech; the "Herald" of 29 January 1934 referred to "vowel variations, slurring, drawling and omission or contraction"; C. N. Baeyertz in 1935²⁵ said "the average Australian voice is unpleasant, colourless and often feeble"; Mr Justice Lowe in 1942²⁶ said "many of us are slovenly . . . some of us fail to open our mouths, others will not make the effort to enunciate the final consonant of a word, still others ramble on in a monotone"; R. G. Menzies²⁷ in 1942 damned "the far too widespread slovenliness of speech" in Australia.

If we examine these comments—practically all were offered without example or analysis of our accent in any form at all—we will note that the bulk of them are in accord with our findings: the closed mouth, spread lips and lowered soft palate.

In "Some Australians Take Stock" (1939) T. S. Dorsch remarks in the course of an examination of the Australian accent that

Australian seems to be a predominantly palatal speech, spoken well forward in the mouth, with a flattened tongue, and making much use of the hard palate in the production of its sounds, vowels as well as consonants. . . . Since front sounds have normally less resonance than back sounds, this fronting tendency contributes, I think, to the thinness of the Australian voice.

If we refer to Figs II and III we will see that Dorsch's points are borne out, although he obviously has not gone far enough. For instance, the "flattened tongue" of which he speaks has been necessitated by a closing of the mouth. The same reason is behind the movement of vowels towards the front of the mouth and their mixing.

Mitchell's statement that the findings of Dorsch are "incomprehensible" are in keeping with his general failure to approach the subject from a scientific angle. Dorsch indulges in generalizations, it is true, but his findings are of considerable importance.

Australian speech habits have at various times been related to

²² Before the Sydney Legacy Club.

²³ Before the Primary Schools Education Conference.

²⁴ In the District Court, Sydney, on 14 May 1934.

²⁵ Before the Legacy Club on 31 January 1935.

²⁶ Chancellor of Melbourne University, in the "ABC Weekly" of 19 September 1942.

²⁷ A former Australian Prime Minister, in the "ABC Weekly" of 26 September 1942.

certain nasal or throat ailments. In the "Bulletin" of 23 March 1901 an examination of South Australian speech was given by a Doctor of Medicine, who offered as one of the reasons for the development of our accent the "national predisposition to nasopharyngeal disease". In detail he described this as "post-nasal adenoids and hypertrophy of the tonsils—the characteristic Australian disease".

In 1940 Dr Halliday Sutherland caused a stir by linking the Australian accent with "an inflammation of the nose, a complaint from which most Australians seem to suffer". He suggested that the prevalence of pollen in the air, from thousands of grasses which produced this pollen, was the cause. The complaint, usually in the form of catarrh or hay fever, he said, caused a slight deafness in the great majority of Australian people. Perhaps this was why Australians spoke more loudly than English people, he suggested.

Current medical opinion is that there is a strong disposition in both Australia and New Zealand to ailments of the nose and throat.²⁸

In Chapter XV, section 3, certain relationships between features in the Australian language and aboriginal words were pointed out. Somewhat similar relationships are perceivable in our accent. This is not to say that people have been affected by native dialects because they have heard aborigines speaking. Probably not more than one person in a thousand has ever spoken with an aboriginal.

²⁸ The "Australian Medical Guide" (1903), by P. E. Muskett, declared: "Catarrh at the back of the nose is . . . unusually frequent in Australia. Probably it is really more prevalent than it even appears to be." Commenting on growths at the back of the nose, the "Medical Guide" says, "it must be admitted that they are very frequent in Australia".

Professor Harvey Sutton, of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, University of Sydney, wrote to me on 21 October 1943: "It is true that children in Australia are prone to nose and throat defects—20% is not an uncommon finding in groups of schoolchildren. In a group of more than 200 university students, one-third had had a nose and throat operation."

In a presidential address before the

South Australian branch of the B.M.A. on 28 June 1900, Dr R. H. Martin commented on certain physical characteristics developed by Australians. Of the nose he said: "It is thin, comes to a fairly sharp angle at the bridge, with skin stretched tightly across it; the nostrils are not large, but the groove round the outer side of the ala nasi (fleshy wing of the nose) is well-marked, and here there is often a goodly growth of hair. The nostrils, especially of the true bushman, often have a great capillary growth, another provision of nature against dust.

"The lips are finely cut, and occasionally dry and sunburnt, and I never remember seeing the mucous membrane of the lips freckled except in this country."

But at the same time the Australian public has an intimate association with native dialects—so intimate perhaps that we tend to overlook it. It is only necessary to consider the tens of thousands of native names given to Australian towns, rivers, suburbs, streets, homes, ships, and racehorses, to realize that here, in daily use, are strong native influences.

We need recite no more than a few of these names to appreciate that they represent syllabic groupings with which no Englishman has to deal in his normal life. Place-names such as Barjarg, Baryulgil, Benjeroop, Booubyjan, Corindhap, Andamooka, Bungeworgorai; horse-names such as Barrenjoey, Moondarewa, Nalleen, Mannawonga; greyhound-names such as Ombilin, Marengo, Banyena, Kinkara, Wigelmar, Wanglecarra; street-names such as Baroona, Benelong, Bellingara, Benaroon, Boambillee, Bunnerong; ships such as Mundalla, Mirrabooka, Orungal, Wanganella, Canberra, Kanimbla, Corrimal, Millimummul; airliners such as Bungana, Loongana, Pengana, Loila, Yuptana, Malonga. They occur in their thousands. More than 150 hotels in New South Wales country centres alone have aboriginal names.

Only a person too hasty to give the subject the attention it deserves could ignore the possible influence upon our speech of these multitudinous aboriginal words. Let it be remembered that, in aboriginal words, we are looking mainly for influences that would confirm the Australian in certain speaking habits, not for any watertight explanation of our accent.

In Chapter XV, section 3, it was pointed out that the recurrence of harsh consonantal sounds in native words is mirrored to a certain extent in our slang, and that the popular *-o* and *-ie* suffixes are found in vast numbers in aboriginal names. From 65 to 70 per cent of Australia's aboriginal place-names end in a vowel. These are mainly *-a* [a], *-i* [aɪ], *-o* [oʊ], *-y*, *-ee* or *-ie* usually rendered with a long [i], and *-oo* [u].

In the [a] group we find such names as Ajana, Alawoona, Albacutya, Alleena, Allgoonera, Alonnah, Aloomba. In the [aɪ] group, Beanbri, Bondi, Biniguy, Boggabri, Bulli. In the [oʊ] group, Ando, Anembo, Anyarro, Bargo, Barwo. In the [i] group, Adaminaby, Adjungbilly, Allambee, Armatree, Baandee, Ballogie, Bamganie. In the [u] group, Amaroo, Bagnoo, Bambaroo, Bangaroo, Boolaroo, Bygoo.

Reference to the earlier analysis of vowels will show that these have been particularly susceptible to change.

One of the Australian's greatest tendencies is towards the mutil-

ation of diphthongs. What infinite opportunity he has of perfecting himself in error! For instance:

[aʊ]: Cowra, Berowra, Nowra, Bowral, Caloundra, Cowlong.

[ɔɪ]: Billeroy, Booberoi, Bulyeroi, Burraboi, Collaroy.

[aɪ] and [oʊ] have already been dealt with as suffixes.

As for unusual combinations of vowels, consider these, *Benayeo*, *Bermagui*, *Boodua*, *Boyeo*, *Buangor*, *Cooee*, *Culgoa*, *Corio*.

It is not hard to see that the Australian tendency to develop diphthongs, triphthongs and even quadriphthongs has had ample opportunity for confirmation by the continual use of such native names as these. It must also be remembered that, just as in New Zealand the white man has ruthlessly massacred Maori vowels, so the Australian has corrupted and distorted the true Australian aboriginal vowels. Corruptions may be heard every day from the Australian radio.

As a general summary of possible aboriginal word influences the following may be noted:

The Australian tendency to replace [ə] by [ɜ] and to introduce the fricative [ɹ] has a close relation to the vast number of native names ending with *-a* or *-ah*.

The tendency to replace final [ɹ] by [i] is confirmed by the vast number of *-y*, *-ee* or *-ie* suffixes in aboriginal.

Any normal tendency to corrupt the diphthongs [aɪ], [aʊ], [ɔɪ] and [oʊ] into triphthongs has ample opportunity of being confirmed by the many times these diphthongs occur in aboriginal.

The well-developed Australian tendency to employ [ə] and [ʌ] and other short vowels is reflected in a multitude of aboriginal words of the following type: *Ballarat*, *Bungulluping*, *Buninyong*, *Bunyip*, *Buralyang*, *Burracoppin*, *Burragorang*, *Burrinjuck*, *Coonabarabran*.

In the consonants, the exceedingly wide appearance of the plosives [p], [b], [t], [d], [k] and [g], can be noted as helping to sharpen and render harsh the Australian speaking voice.

These influences should not be exaggerated, but it is impossible to overlook them. It must be regarded as something more than a simple coincidence that these comparisons should be possible.

6.—RADIO AND THE COMMON MAN

The importance of radio in the propagation of good speech is no less significant in Australia than in any other part of the world.

Wrote Lloyd James in "Broadcast English" (1935), issued by the B.B.C.:

It is not improbable that this general dissemination of the spoken word may tend to counteract the disintegrating influences that have hitherto always disturbed the unity of a language when that language has, through the political expansion of a nation, become scattered over an area larger than that which gave it birth.

The English language is, of course, the case in point.

The counteraction to disintegrating forces depends on two main things. First, the norm or standard of speech adopted. Second, the rigidity with which that norm is observed.

If, for instance, the people of a country as a whole employ a type of speech different from the norm adopted by a radio station, the station may be making worthy efforts to improve public speech generally, but its influence will be so remote that it will defeat its own ends. In short, the public will regard announcers of the particular radio station as unnatural and affected.

If, on the other hand, a station allows speakers of any type to go on the air it will exert no educative influence at all upon the public.

The first essential is obviously a middle path, with the tendency always towards careful and clear enunciation, rather than towards popular looseness.

In New Zealand, the Government-owned National Broadcasting Service did not debate on the matter. It plumped first and last for B.B.C. English and adopted B.B.C. "Broadcast English" pronunciations with no more than one or two concessions to New Zealand speech. The result has been that the Broadcasting Service is hopelessly out of touch with the ordinary listening public.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission would have it known to the world at large that they are guilty of no such policy, that their announcers—both male and female—speak with an Educated Australian accent. "Clear Australian is nothing to be ashamed of," said the Federal Talks Controller (B. H. Molesworth) in 1940. But anyone with half an ear knows perfectly well that this supposed A.B.C. policy is mainly pretence. During a period of nearly two years, when I worked for that organization, I had ample opportunity of acquainting myself not only with its policy on speech, but with some of its announcers.

I say without hesitation that the A.B.C. is out of touch with the Australian speaking public, and that this is one of the reasons why the bulk of listeners tune in to commercial stations in preference to the A.B.C.

The "ABC Weekly" was correct when it wrote editorially on 12 September 1942 that the problem was "whether broadcasting is to exert its proper influence over listeners by sounding natural and attractive to them or whether it is to be discounted by them as aloof and superior".

The A.B.C. has a long way to go before its announcers in general will cease to be regarded as aloof and superior. The few announcers of Australian type 3 standard that the A.B.C. has permitted into its service are not sufficient to outweigh the mouthings, verbal posturings and mincing speech of the majority.

All this is in spite of the declaration by the Commission chairman (W. J. Cleary), in evidence before the Parliamentary Select Committee on Broadcasting, in September 1941:

We abhor affected accents. In training broadcasting cadets we discourage the Oxford accent developed in the best Australian finishing schools. We have not tried to standardize pronunciation. We should no more adopt an English idiom than an American one. . . . Every quest for announcers has revealed that the number of men most suitable have been Englishmen.²⁰

These are illuminating comments. The A.B.C. is not breaking new ground in avoiding Oxonian accents; the B.B.C. adopted that policy long ago, but B.B.C. speech still remains out of touch with the Australian listening public. That Australians are likely to have B.B.C. accents foisted on them is revealed by the statement that the A.B.C. regards Englishmen as the most suitable announcers.

So Cleary's comments do not represent much of an answer anyway. But by far the worst feature of his comments is his admission that the A.B.C. has not sought any standardization in pronunciation. Unless it can give the Australian public a uniform type of speech, how can it pretend to educate them in their speech? Cleary says that the A.B.C. announcers are not affected, but the public thinks otherwise. So the A.B.C. has not even standardized its affectations, much less tried to formulate a standardized system of pronunciation that will appeal to the listening public.

The simple facts are these: the A.B.C. has made no systematic and detailed attempt to discover the exact nature of the Australian accent, and it is, accordingly, floundering in a lingual wilderness and failing to play its part in educating the public. Australians are by now accustomed to the ridiculous travesty

²⁰ Taken from reports in the Sydney "Telegraph" and "Sun" 11 and 12 September 1941.

of their accent often handed out by overseas writers and actors. Unfortunately, local writers and actors frequently make the same stupid errors. In the documentary film "South-west Pacific" most of the accent and most of the idiom were pure Cockney. Many radio plays, presented by commercial stations as well as the A.B.C., have the same fault.

We have seen enough mixed and irresponsible opinions by observers quoted in this chapter to realize that the authorities are a long way from accepting this clearcut statement by Mr Justice Lowe:

So long as our present mode of life continues, I regard as inevitable the further development of many tendencies already evident in Australian speech. The great mass of Australians will hear only the speech of their fellow Australians: they have no other standard of comparison for their own speech, and, by a process analagous to inbreeding in the animal world, existing characteristics will tend to become more pronounced.³⁰

This fundamental principle must be realized by our official broadcasting organization. Until it is realized, the A.B.C. will be failing in one of the great duties that radio has to its public—the duty of education.

³⁰ "ABC Weekly", 19 September 1942.

SUMMARY

Recommendations to the Federal Government

In the course of this book several recommendations have been made that should merit attention by the Federal Government and education authorities. These may be summarized as follows:

1. That strenuous efforts be made to raise the standard of education in Australia (Chapter XV, section 1).

2. That diction be made a regular subject in the curriculum of all Australian schools (Chapter XVIII, section 4).

3. That diction be made a subject of primary importance in the training of teachers for all schools and universities (Chapter XVIII, section 4).

4. That the Federal Government finance a detailed nationwide examination of Australian pronunciation (Chapter XVIII, section 1).

5. That the Australian Broadcasting Commission be obliged, in relation to the selection and training of announcers, to observe a policy that represents some tangible effort to retain contact with the listening public (Chapter XVIII, section 6).

6. That a Government effort be made to discourage the education of aborigines at mission stations in the use of pidgin English, Basic English being an ideal means for educating natives (Chapter XIII, section 3).

7. That if denominational missions in New Guinea are to be permitted to reduce pidgin English to written form, standardization be insisted upon; that, in any case, such activities be discouraged (Chapter XIII, section 5).

8. That the Federal Government finance a detailed examination of the Norfolk Island-Pitcairn Island dialect (Chapter XIII, section 4).

9. That the Federal Government set up a committee of scientific authorities to correct and standardize the nomenclature of Australian flora and fauna (Chapter XII, section 1).

10. That the Federal Government finance the compilation of a dictionary of Australian aboriginal dialects (Chapter XIII, section 1).

LAST MINUTE ADDITIONS

Panic night, a weekly scrub and polish session to clean barracks, *in the box*, in the front line (Army slang); *pommyness*, that which reveals English characteristics, *cobbership*, friendship, S. Champion in "The Pommy Cow" (1944); *cobberistic*, that which reveals characteristics of friendship, F. Clune, "Dig"; *Australianity*, having Australian characteristics, "The ABC Weekly", 6 January, 1945; *platypusiana*, stories and records of the platypus, "Bulletin", 24 January, 1945; *eucalyptusy*, having characteristics of eucalyptus, H. C. Brewster, "King's Cross Calling" (1944); *to south*, to put in one's pocket, *bomb happies*, men suffering from bomb happiness, L. Glassop, "We Were the Rats" (1944); *sterky*, frightened, J. Devanny, "By Tropic Sea and Jungle" (1944).

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